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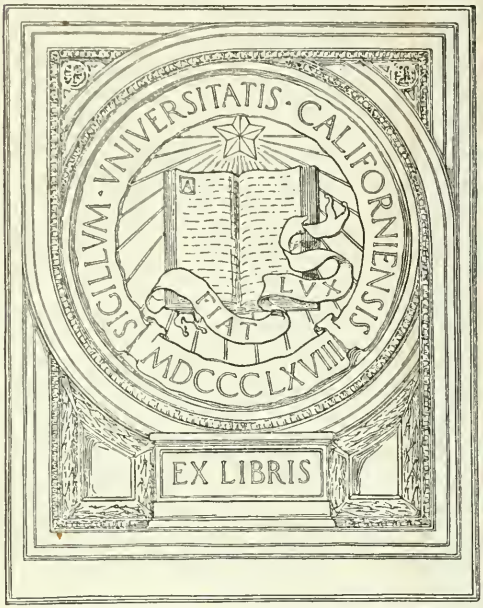

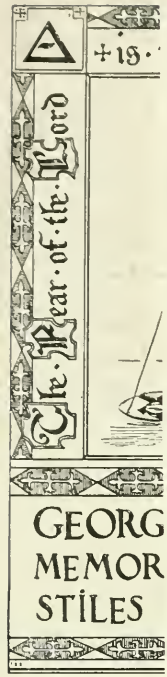

GEORG
MEMOR
STILES

Robert Hall

THE

WORKS

OF THE

REV. ROBERT HALL, A.M.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE, BY DR. GREGORY; REMINISCENCES, BY JOHN GREENE, ESQ.; AND HIS CHARACTER AS A PREACHER, BY THE REV. JOHN FOSTER.

PUBLISHED UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF

OLINTHUS GREGORY, LL.D., F.R.A.S.,

PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS IN THE ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY;

AND

JOSEPH BELCHER, D.D.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

NEW YORK:

HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,

329 & 331 PEARL STREET,

FRANKLIN SQUARE

1858.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year one thousand eight hundred and forty-four, by
HARPER & BROTHERS,
In the Office of the Clerk of the District Court of the Southern District of New York.

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MODERN INFIDELITY CONSIDERED, WITH RESPECT TO ITS INFLUENCE ON SOCIETY:

IN

A SERMON

PREACHED AT

THE BAPTIST MEETING, CAMBRIDGE.

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.—*St Paul.*

Sunt qui in fortunæ jam casibus, omnia ponant,
Et nullo credant mundum rectore moveri,
Natura volvente vices et lucis, et anni;
Atque ideo intrepidi quæcunque altaria tangunt.—*Juv.*

PREFACE.

The author knows not whether it be necessary to apologize for the extraordinary length of this sermon, which so much exceeds the usual limits of public discourses; for it is only for the reader to conceive (by a fiction of the imagination, if he pleases so to consider it) that the patience of his audience indulged him with their attention during its delivery. The fact is, not being in the habit of writing his sermons, this discourse was not committed to paper till after it was delivered: so that the phrascology may probably vary, and the bulk be somewhat extended: but the substance is certainly retained.

He must crave the indulgence of the religious public for having blended so little *theology* with it. He is fully aware the chief attention of a Christian minister should be occupied in explaining the doctrines and enforcing the duties of genuine Christianity. Nor is he chargeable, he hopes, in the exercise of his public functions, with any remarkable deviation from this rule of conduct: yet he is equally convinced, excursions into other topics are sometimes both lawful and necessary. The versatility of error demands a correspondent variety in the methods of defending truth: and from whom have the public more right to expect its defence, in opposition to the encroachments of error and infidelity, than from those who profess to devote their studies and their lives to the advancement of virtue and religion? Accordingly, a multitude of publications on these subjects, equally powerful in argument and impressive in manner, have issued from divines of different persuasions, which must be allowed to have done the utmost honour to the clerical profession. The most luminous statements of the evidences of Christianity, on historical grounds, have been made; the petulant cavils of infidels satisfactorily refuted; and their ignorance, if not put to shame, at least amply exposed: so that revelation, as far as truth and reason can prevail, is on all sides triumphant.

There is one point of view, however, in which the respective systems remain to be examined, which, though hitherto little considered, is forced upon our attention by the present conduct of our adversaries; that is, their *influence on society*. The controversy appears to have taken a new turn. The advocates of infidelity, baffled in the field of argument, though unwilling to relinquish the contest, have changed their mode of attack; and seem less disposed to impugn the authority than to supersede the use of revealed religion, by giving such repre-

sentations of man and of society as are calculated to make its sanctions appear unreasonable and unnecessary. Their aim is not so much to discredit the pretensions of any particular religion as to set aside the principles common to all.

To obliterate the sense of Deity, of moral sanctions, and a future world,—and by these means to prepare the way for the total subversion of every institution, both social and religious, which men have been hitherto accustomed to revere,—is evidently the principal object of modern skeptics; the first sophists who have avowed an attempt to govern the world, without inculcating the persuasion of a superior power. It might well excite our surprise to behold an effort to shake off the yoke of religion, which was totally unknown during the prevalence of gross superstition, reserved for a period of the world distinguished from every other by the possession of a revelation more pure, more perfect, and better authenticated than the enlightened sages of antiquity ever ventured to anticipate, were we not fully persuaded the immaculate holiness of this revelation is precisely that which renders it disgusting to men who are determined at all events to retain their vices. Our Saviour furnishes the solution:—*They love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil; neither will they come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved.*

While all the religions, the Jewish excepted, which, previous to the promulgation of Christianity, prevailed in the world, partly the contrivance of human policy, partly the offspring of ignorant fear, mixed with the mutilated remains of traditionary revelation, were favourable to the indulgence of some vices, and but feebly restrained the practice of others; between vice of every sort and in every degree, and the religion of Jesus, there subsists an irreconcilable enmity, an eternal discord. The dominion of Christianity being in the very essence of it the dominion of virtue, we need look no further for the sources of hostility in any who oppose it, than their attachment to vice and disorder.

This view of the controversy, if it be just, demonstrates its supreme importance; and furnishes the strongest plea with every one with whom it is not a matter of indifference whether vice or virtue, delusion or truth, governs the world, to exert his talents, in whatever proportion they are possessed, in *contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.* In such a crisis, is it not best for Christians of all denominations, that they may better concentrate their forces against the common adversary, to suspend for the present their internal disputes; imitating the policy of wise states, who have never failed to consider the invasion of an enemy as the signal for terminating the contests of party? Internal peace is the best fruit we can reap from external danger. The momentous contest at issue between the Christian church and infidels may instruct us how trivial, for the most part, are the controversies of its members with each other; and that the different ceremonies, opinions, and practices by which they are distinguished correspond to the variety of feature and complexion discernible in the offspring of the same parent, among whom there

subsists the greatest family likeness. May it please God so to dispose the minds of Christians of every visible church and community, *that Ephraim may no longer vex Judah, nor Judah Ephraim;* that the only rivalry felt in future may be, who shall most advance the interests of our common Christianity; and the only provocation sustained, that of *provoking each other to love and good works!* When, at the distance of more than half a century, Christianity was assaulted by a *Woolston*, a *Tindal*, and a *Morgan*, it was ably supported, both by clergymen of the established church, and writers among Protestant dissenters. The labours of a *Clarke* and a *Butler* were associated with those of a *Doddridge*, a *Leland*, and a *Lardner*, with such equal reputation and success, as to make it evident that the intrinsic excellence of religion needs not the aid of external appendages; but that, with or without a dowry, her charms are of sufficient power to fix and engage the heart.

The writer of this discourse will feel himself happy, should his example stimulate any of his brethren of superior abilities to contribute their exertions in so good a cause. His apology for not entering more at large into the proofs of the being of a God,* and the evidences of Christianity,† is, that these subjects have been already handled with great ability by various writers; and that he wished rather to confine himself to one view of the subject—The total incompatibility of skeptical principles with the existence of society. Should his life be spared, he may probably at some future time enter into a fuller and more particular examination of the infidel philosophy, both with respect to its speculative principles and its practical effects,—its influence on society and on the individual. In the mean time he humbly consecrates this discourse to the honour of that Saviour, who, when the means of a more liberal offering are wanting, commends the widow's mite.

CAMBRIDGE, *January* 18, 1801.

* See an excellent sermon on Atheism by the Rev. Mr. Estlin, of Bristol, at whose meeting the substance of this discourse was first preached. In the sermon referred to, the argument for the existence of a Deity is stated with the utmost clearness and precision; and the sophistry of Dupuis, a French infidel, refuted in a very satisfactory manner.

† It is almost superfluous to name a work so universally known as Dr. Paley's View of the Evidences of Christianity, which is probably, without exception, the most clear and satisfactory statement of the historical proofs of the Christian religion ever exhibited in any age or country

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

Nothing can be more erroneous than the idea, entertained by a few persons, that Mr. Hall recited his sermons *memoriter*, from the study of a previously written composition. His eloquence was the spontaneous result of his vigorous and richly stored intellect, and needed not the aid of the usual expedients of men of ordinary mind. There is great reason to believe, that during the entire extent of his ministry he only committed one sermon to memory from a previously composed manuscript, and that was the second in this volume, "Reflections on War." It was preached on a day of thanksgiving, at the termination of a long and dreadful war; it was a publicly announced sermon, to aid the funds of a benevolent society; persons of different religious and political sentiments were expected to be assembled, at a time when the violent party-feelings excited by the French Revolution of 1789 had but little subsided; and Mr. Hall, afraid of yielding to his own emotions on such an occasion, and perhaps of disturbing the feelings of harmony which it was hoped would prevail, thought it advisable for once to deviate from his usual course. That course was, very briefly to sketch, commonly upon a sheet of letter-paper (in a few cases rather more fully), the plan of the proposed discourse, marking the divisions, specifying a few texts, and sometimes writing the first sentence. This he regarded as "digging a channel for his thoughts to flow in." Then, calling into exercise the power of abstraction, which he possessed in a degree I never saw equalled, he would, whether alone or not, pursue his trains of thought, retrace and extend them, until the whole were engraven on his mind; and when once so fixed in their entire connexion, they were never after obliterated. The result was on all occasions the same; so that, without recurring to the ordinary expedients, or loading his memory with words and phrases, he uniformly brought his mind, with an unburdened vigour and elasticity to bear upon its immediate purpose, recalling the selected train of thought, and communicating it to others, in diction the most felicitous, appropriate, and impressive. This was uniformly the case with regard to the tenor and substance of his discourses; but the most striking and impressive passages were often, strictly speaking, extemporaneous.

On various occasions I have ascertained the correctness of his recollection as to trains of thought and matters of arrangement. Thus, on drawing his attention fully to an interesting conversation which occurred nearly thirty years before, he has given as vivid and graphic a sketch of the persons present, their positions in the room, and of the main topics discussed, as though all had occurred in the preceding week. So, again, with respect to sermons preached early in the present century, and which seemed to have entirely escaped from his recollection; when a reference to some illustration, or the mode of treating a subsidiary topic, has supplied the adequate clew, he has accurately described the plan, the reasoning, the object of the discourse, the illustrations employed, the principal texts adduced, &c., dwelling especially, as was always most natural to him, upon the parts that he regarded as defective.

The history of the following sermon, on "Modern Infidelity," may serve still further to illustrate the peculiar structure of Mr. Hall's intellect. He preached it first at Bristol, in October, 1800, and again at Cambridge in the month of November. Having yielded to the solicitations of his friends, and consented to its publication, there remained two difficulties, that of writing down the sermon (of which not a single sentence was upon paper), and that of superintending the

press. I, who then resided at Cambridge, offered to undertake both these, provided he would engage not to go farther than ten miles from Cambridge, and allow me to follow him, wherever he went, to obtain "copy," as it should be needed. He acceded to that part of the arrangement which related to the printing; but would not consent that I should be his amanuensis on that occasion. The writing, therefore, he undertook himself, but with great reluctance, on account of the severe pain which even then (and, indeed, much earlier) he experienced when remaining long in a sitting posture. The work, in consequence, proceeded slowly, and with many interruptions. At first I obtained from him eight pages, and took them to the printer; after a few days, four pages more; then two or three pages; then a more violent attack of his distressing pain in the back compelled him to write two or three pages *while lying on the floor*; and soon afterward a still more violent paroxysm occasioned a longer suspension of his labour. After an interval of a week, the work was renewed at the joint entreaty of myself and other friends. It was pursued in the same manner, two or three pages being obtained for the printer at one time, a similar portion after a day or two, until, at the end of seven weeks, the task was completed. During the whole time of the composition, thus conducted, Mr. Hall never saw a single page of the printer's work. When I applied for more "copy," he asked what it was that he had written last, and then proceeded. Very often, after he had given me a small portion, he would inquire if he had written it nearly in the words which he had employed in delivering the sermon orally. After he had written down the striking apostrophe which occurs at about page 76 of most of the editions—"Eternal God! on what are thine enemies intent! what are those enterprises of guilt and horror, that, for the safety of their performers, require to be enveloped in a darkness which the eye of Heaven must not *penetrate!*"—he asked, "Did I say *penetrate*, sir, when I preached it?" "Yes." "Do you think, sir, I may venture to alter it? for no man who considered the force of the English language would use a word of three syllables there, but from absolute necessity." "You are doubtless at liberty to alter it, if you think well." "Then be so good, sir, to take your pencil, and for *penetrate* put *pierce*; *pierce* is the word, sir, and the only word to be used there." I have now the evidence of this before me, in the entire manuscript, which I carefully preserve among my richest literary treasures.

At the end of seven weeks Mr. Hall's labour, thus conducted, being, greatly to his delight, brought to a close, I presented him with a complete copy of his printed sermon, *not one word* of which he had seen in its progress.

During this interval he had preached at least twenty times, had paid his pastoral visits, as usual, had been often in the society of the literary men with whom he then associated, and had, with all his characteristic ardour, carried on, simultaneously, two distinct courses of reading.

I mistake greatly, if, after the perusal of this simple narrative, the reader will not turn to the sermon with additional relish, and meditate with augmented pleasure upon the peculiarities of this most valuable production, and the singular character of its author's mind.

OLINTHUS GREGORY.

Royal Military Academy,
June 1, 1831

A SERMON.

EPHES. ii. 12.

Without God in the world.

As the Christian ministry is established for the instruction of men, throughout every age, in truth and holiness, it must adapt itself to the ever-shifting scenes of the moral world, and stand ready to repel the attacks of impiety and error, under whatever form they may appear The church and the world form two societies so distinct, and are governed by such opposite principles and maxims, that, as well from this contrariety as from the express warnings of Scripture, true Christians must look for a state of warfare, with this consoling assurance, that the church, like the burning bush beheld by Moses in the land of Midian, may be encompassed with flames, but will never be consumed.

When she was delivered from the persecuting power of Rome, she only experienced a change of trials. The oppression of external violence was followed by the more dangerous and insidious attacks of internal enemies. The freedom of inquiry claimed and asserted at the Reformation degenerated, in the hands of men who professed the principles without possessing the spirit of the Reformers, into a fondness for speculative refinements; and consequently into a source of dispute, faction, and heresy. While Protestants attended more to the points on which they differed than to those in which they agreed,—while more zeal was employed in settling ceremonies and defending subtleties than in enforcing plain revealed truths,—the lovely fruits of peace and charity perished under the storms of controversy.

In this disjointed and disordered state of the Christian church, they who never looked into the interior of Christianity were apt to suspect, that to a subject so fruitful in particular disputes must attach a general uncertainty; and that a religion founded on revelation could never have occasioned such discordancy of principle and practice among its disciples. Thus infidelity is the joint offspring of an irreligious temper and unholy speculation, employed, not in examining the evidences of Christianity, but in detecting the vices and imperfections of professing Christians. It has passed through various stages, each distinguished by higher gradations of impiety; for when men arrogantly abandon their guide, and wilfully shut their eyes on the light of

heaven, it is wisely ordained that their errors shall multiply at every step, until their extravagance confutes itself, and the mischief of their principles works its own antidote. That such has been the progress of infidelity will be obvious from a slight survey of its history.

Lord HERBERT, the first and purest of our English freethinkers, who flourished in the beginning of the reign of Charles the First, did not so much impugn the doctrine or the morality of the Scriptures, as attempt to supersede their necessity, by endeavouring to show that the great principles of the unity of God, a moral government, and a future world, are taught with sufficient clearness by the light of nature. BOLINGBROKE, and some of his successors, advanced much farther, and attempted to invalidate the proofs of the moral character of the Deity, and consequently all expectations of rewards and punishments; leaving the Supreme Being no other perfections than those which belong to a first cause, or almighty contriver. After him, at a considerable distance, followed HUME, the most subtle, if not the most philosophical, of the Deists; who, by perplexing the relations of cause and effect, boldly aimed to introduce a universal skepticism, and to pour a more than Egyptian darkness into the whole region of morals. Since his time skeptical writers have sprung up in abundance, and infidelity has allured multitudes to its standard: the young and superficial by its dexterous sophistry, the vain by the literary fame of its champions, and the profligate by the licentiousness of its principles. Atheism the most undisguised has at length begun to make its appearance.

Animated by numbers, and imboldened by success, the infidels of the present day have given a new direction to their efforts, and impressed a new character on the ever-growing mass of their impious speculations.

By uniting more closely with each other, by giving a sprinkling of irreligion to all their literary productions, they aim to engross the formation of the public mind; and, amid the warmest professions of attachment to virtue, to effect an entire disruption of morality from religion. Pretending to be the teachers of virtue and the guides of life, they propose to revolutionize the morals of mankind; to regenerate the world by a process entirely new; and to rear the temple of virtue, not merely without the aid of religion, but on the renunciation of its principles, and the derision of its sanctions. Their party has derived a great accession of numbers and strength from events the most momentous and astonishing in the political world, which have divided the sentiments of Europe between hope and terror; and which, however they may issue, have, for the present, swelled the ranks of infidelity. So rapidly, indeed, has it advanced since this crisis, that a great majority on the Continent, and in England a considerable proportion of those who pursue literature as a profession,* may justly be considered as the open or disguised abetters of atheism.

With respect to the skeptical and religious systems, the inquiry at

* By those who pursue literature as a profession, the author would be understood to mean that numerous class of literary men who draw their principal subsistence from their writings.

present is not so much which is the truest in speculation, as which is the most useful in practice: or, in other words, whether morality will be best promoted by considering it as a part of a great and comprehensive law, emanating from the will of a supreme, omnipotent legislator; or as a mere expedient, adapted to our present situation, enforced by no other motives than those which arise from the prospects and interests of the present state. The absurdity of atheism having been demonstrated so often and so clearly by many eminent men that this part of the subject is exhausted, I should hasten immediately to what I have more particularly in view, were I not apprehensive a discourse of this kind may be expected to contain some statement of the argument in proof of a Deity; which, therefore, I shall present in as few and plain words as possible.

When we examine a watch, or any other piece of machinery, we instantly perceive marks of design. The arrangement of its several parts, and the adaptation of its movements to one result, show it to be a contrivance; nor do we ever imagine the faculty of contriving to be in the watch itself, but in a separate agent. If we turn from art to nature, we behold a vast magazine of contrivances; we see innumerable objects replete with the most exquisite design. The human eye, for example, is formed with admirable skill for the purpose of sight, the ear for the function of hearing. As in the productions of art we never think of ascribing the power of contrivance to the machine itself, so we are certain the skill displayed in the human structure is not a property of man, since he is very imperfectly acquainted with his own formation. If there be an inseparable relation between the ideas of a contrivance and a contriver, and it be evident, in regard to the human structure, the designing agent is not man himself, there must undeniably be some separate invisible being, who is his former. This great Being we mean to indicate by the appellation of Deity.

This reasoning admits but of one reply. Why, it will be said, may we not suppose the world has always continued as it is; that is, that there has been a constant succession of finite beings, appearing and disappearing on the earth from all eternity? I answer, whatever is supposed to have occasioned this constant succession, exclusive of an intelligent cause, will never account for the undeniable marks of design visible in all finite beings. Nor is the absurdity of supposing a contrivance without a contriver diminished by this imaginary succession; but rather increased, by being repeated at every step of the series.

Besides, an eternal succession of finite beings involves in it a contradiction, and is therefore plainly impossible. As the supposition is made to get quit of the idea of any one having existed from eternity, each of the beings in the succession must have begun in time: but the succession itself is eternal. We have then the succession of beings infinitely earlier than any being in the succession; or, in other words, a series of beings running on, *ad infinitum*, before it reached any particular being, which is absurd.

From these considerations it is manifest there must be some eternal

Being, or nothing could ever have existed; and since the beings which we behold bear in their whole structure evident marks of wisdom and design, it is equally certain that he who formed them is a wise and intelligent agent.

To prove the unity of this great Being, in opposition to a plurality of gods, it is not necessary to have recourse to metaphysical abstractions. It is sufficient to observe, that the notion of more than one author of nature is inconsistent with that harmony of design which pervades her works; that it explains no appearances, is supported by no evidence, and serves no purpose, but to embarrass and perplex our conceptions.

Such are the proofs of the existence of that great and glorious Being whom we denominate God; and it is not presumption to say, it is impossible to find another truth in the whole compass of morals who, according to the justest laws of reasoning, admits of such strict and rigorous demonstration.

But I proceed to the more immediate object of this discourse, which, as has been already intimated, is not so much to evince the falsehood of skepticism as a theory, as to display its mischievous effects, contrasted with those which result from the belief of a Deity and a future state. The subject, viewed in this light, may be considered under two aspects: the influence of the opposite systems on the principles of morals and on the formation of character. The first may be styled their direct, the latter their equally important, but indirect, consequence and tendency.

I. The skeptical or irreligious system subverts the whole foundation of morals. It may be assumed as a maxim, that no person can be required to act contrary to his greatest good, or his highest interest, comprehensively viewed in relation to the whole duration of his being. It is often our duty to forego our own interest *partially*, to sacrifice a smaller pleasure for the sake of a greater, to incur a present evil in pursuit of a distant good of more consequence. In a word, to arbitrate among interfering claims of inclination is the moral arithmetic of human life. But to risk the happiness of the whole duration of our being in any case whatever, were it possible, would be foolish; because the sacrifice must, by the nature of it, be so great as to preclude the possibility of compensation.

As the present world, on skeptical principles, is the only place of recompense, whenever the practice of virtue fails to promise the greatest sum of present good,—cases which often occur in reality, and much oftener in appearance,—every motive to virtuous conduct is superseded; a deviation from rectitude becomes the part of wisdom; and should the path of virtue, in addition to this, be obstructed by disgrace, torment, or death, to persevere would be madness and folly, and a violation of the first and most essential law of nature. Virtue, on these principles, being in numberless instances at war with self-preservation, never can, or ought to become, a fixed habit of the mind.

The system of infidelity is not only incapable of arming virtue for

great and trying occasions, but leaves it unsupported in the most ordinary occurrences. In vain will its advocates appeal to a moral sense to benevolence and sympathy: for it is undeniable that these impulses may be overcome. In vain will they expatiate on the tranquillity and pleasure attendant on a virtuous course: for though you may remind the offender that in disregarding them he has violated his nature, and that a conduct consistent with them is productive of much internal satisfaction; yet if he reply that his taste is of a different sort, that there are other gratifications which he values more, and that every man must choose his own pleasures, the argument is at an end.

Rewards and punishments, assigned by infinite power, afford a palpable and pressing motive which can never be neglected without renouncing the character of a rational creature: but tastes and relishes are not to be prescribed.

A motive in which the reason of man shall acquiesce, enforcing the practice of virtue at all times and seasons, enters into the very essence of moral obligation. Modern infidelity supplies no such motives: it is therefore essentially and infallibly a system of enervation, turpitude, and vice.

This chasm in the construction of morals can only be supplied by the firm belief of a rewarding and avenging Deity, who binds duty and happiness, though they may seem distant, in an indissoluble chain; without which, whatever usurps the name of virtue is not a principle, but a feeling; not a determinate rule, but a fluctuating expedient, varying with the tastes of individuals, and changing with the scenes of life.

Nor is this the only way in which infidelity subverts the foundation of morals. All reasoning on morals presupposes a distinction between inclinations and duties, affections and rules. The former prompt; the latter prescribe. The former supply motives to action; the latter regulate and control it. Hence it is evident, if virtue have any just claim to authority, it must be under the latter of these notions; that is, under the character of a law. It is under this notion, *in fact*, that its dominion has ever been acknowledged to be paramount and supreme.

But, without the intervention of a superior will, it is impossible there should be any moral laws, except in the lax metaphorical sense in which we speak of the laws of matter and motion. Men being essentially equal, morality is, on these principles, only a stipulation, or silent compact, into which every individual is supposed to enter, as far as suits his convenience, and for the breach of which he is accountable to nothing but his own mind. His own mind is his law, his tribunal, and his judge!

Two consequences, the most disastrous to society, will inevitably follow the general prevalence of this system:—the frequent perpetration of great crimes, and the total absence of great virtues.

1. In those conjunctures which tempt avarice or inflame ambition, when a crime flatters with the prospect of impunity, and the certainty of immense advantage, what is to restrain an atheist from its commission? To say that remorse will deter him is absurd; for remorse,

as distinguished from pity, is the sole offspring of religious belief, the extinction of which is the great purpose of the infidel philosophy.

The dread of punishment or infamy from his fellow-creatures will be an equally ineffectual barrier; because crimes are only committed under such circumstances as suggest the hope of concealment: not to say that crimes themselves will soon lose their infamy and their horror under the influence of that system which destroys the sanctity of virtue, by converting it into a low calculation of worldly interest. Here the sense of an ever-present Ruler, and of an avenging Judge, is of the most awful and indispensable necessity; as it is that alone which impresses on all crimes the character of *folly*, shows that duty and interest in every instance coincide, and that the most prosperous career of vice, the most brilliant successes of criminality, are but an *accumulation of wrath against the day of wrath*.

As the frequent perpetration of great crimes is an inevitable consequence of the diffusion of skeptical principles, so, to understand this consequence in its full extent, we must look beyond their immediate effects, and consider the disruption of social ties, the destruction of confidence, the terror, suspicion, and hatred which must prevail in that state of society in which barbarous deeds are familiar. The tranquillity which pervades a well-ordered community, and the mutual good offices which bind its members together, are founded on an implied confidence in the indisposition to annoy; in the justice, humanity, and moderation of those among whom we dwell. So that the worst consequence of crimes is, that they impair the stock of public charity and general tenderness. The dread and hatred of our species would infallibly be grafted on a conviction that we were exposed every moment to the surges of an unbridled ferocity, and that nothing but the power of the magistrate stood between us and the daggers of assassins. In such a state, laws, deriving no support from public manners, are unequal to the task of curbing the fury of the passions; which, from being concentrated into selfishness, fear, and revenge, acquire new force. Terror and suspicion beget cruelty, and inflict injuries by way of prevention. Pity is extinguished in the stronger impulse of self-preservation. The tender and generous affections are crushed; and nothing is seen but the retaliation of wrongs, the fierce and unmitigated struggle for superiority. This is but a faint sketch of the incalculable calamities and horrors we must expect, should we be so unfortunate as ever to witness the triumph of modern infidelity.

2. This system is a soil as barren of great and sublime virtues as it is prolific in crimes. By great and sublime virtues are meant those which are called into action on great and trying occasions, which demand the sacrifice of the dearest interests and prospects of human life, and sometimes of life itself: the virtues, in a word, which, by their rarity and splendour, draw admiration, and have rendered illustrious the character of patriots, martyrs, and confessors. It requires but little reflection to perceive, that whatever veils a future world, and contracts the limits of existence within the present life, must tend, in a proportionable degree, to diminish the grandeur and narrow the sphere of human agency.

As well might you expect exalted sentiments of justice from a professed gamester, as look for noble principles in the man whose hopes and fears are all suspended on the present moment, and who stakes the whole happiness of his being on the events of this vain and fleeting life. If he be ever impelled to the performance of great achievements in a good cause, it must be solely by the hope of fame; a motive which, besides that it makes virtue the servant of opinion, usually grows weaker at the approach of death; and which, however it may surmount the love of existence in the heat of battle, or in the moment of public observation, can seldom be expected to operate with much force on the retired duties of a private station.

In affirming that infidelity is unfavourable to the higher class of virtues, we are supported as well by facts as by reasoning. We should be sorry to load our adversaries with unmerited reproach: but to what history, to what record will they appeal for the traits of moral greatness exhibited by their disciples? Where shall we look for the trophies of infidel magnanimity or atheistical virtue? Not that we mean to accuse them of inactivity: they have recently filled the world with the fame of their exploits; exploits of a different kind indeed, but of imperishable memory, and disastrous lustre.

Though it is confessed great and splendid actions are not the ordinary employment of life, but must, from their nature, be reserved for high and eminent occasions; yet that system is essentially defective which leaves no room for their production. They are important, both from their immediate advantage and their remoter influence. They often save, and always illustrate, the age and nation in which they appear. They raise the standard of morals; they arrest the progress of degeneracy; they diffuse a lustre over the path of life: monuments of the greatness of the human soul, they present to the world the august image of virtue in her sublimest form, from which streams of light and glory issue to remote times and ages; while their commemoration by the pen of historians and poets awakens in distant bosoms the sparks of kindred excellence.

Combine the frequent and familiar perpetration of atrocious deeds with the dearth of great and generous actions, and you have the exact picture of that condition of society which completes the degradation of the species—the frightful contrast of dwarfish virtues and gigantic vices, where every thing good is mean and little, and every thing evil is rank and luxuriant: a dead and sickening uniformity prevails, broken only at intervals by volcanic eruptions of anarchy and crime.

II. Hitherto we have considered the influence of skepticism on the principles of virtue; and have endeavoured to show that it despoils it of its dignity, and lays its authority in the dust. Its influence on the formation of character remains to be examined. The actions of men are oftener determined by their character than their interest: their conduct takes its colour more from their acquired taste, inclinations, and habits, than from a deliberate regard to their greatest good. It is only on great occasions the mind awakes to take an extended survey

of her whole course, and that she suffers the dictates of reason to impress a new bias upon her movements. The actions of each day are, for the most part, links which follow each other in the chain of custom. Hence the great effort of practical wisdom is to imbue the mind with right tastes, affections, and habits; the elements of character, and masters of action.

1. The exclusion of a Supreme Being and of a superintending Providence tends directly to the destruction of moral taste. It robs the universe of all finished and consummate excellence even in idea. The admiration of perfect wisdom and goodness for which we are formed, and which kindles such unspeakable rapture in the soul, finding in the regions of skepticism nothing to which it corresponds, droops and languishes. In a world which presents a fair spectacle of order and beauty, of a vast family nourished and supported by an Almighty Parent,—in a world which leads the devout mind, step by step, to the contemplation of the first fair and the first good, the skeptic is encompassed with nothing but obscurity, meanness, and disorder.

When we reflect on the manner in which the idea of Deity is formed, we must be convinced that such an idea, intimately present to the mind, must have a most powerful effect in refining the moral taste. Composed of the richest elements, it embraces, in the character of a beneficent Parent and Almighty Ruler, whatever is venerable in wisdom, whatever is awful in authority, whatever is touching in goodness.

Human excellence is blended with many imperfections, and seen under many limitations. It is beheld only in detached and separate portions, nor ever appears in any one character whole and entire. So that when, in imitation of the Stoics, we wish to form out of these fragments the notion of a perfectly wise and good man, we know it is a mere fiction of the mind, without any real being in whom it is imbodied and realized. In the belief of a Deity, these conceptions are reduced to reality: the scattered rays of an ideal excellence are concentrated, and become the real attributes of that Being with whom we stand in the nearest relation, who sits supreme at the head of the universe, is armed with infinite power, and pervades all nature with his presence.

The efficacy of these views in producing and augmenting a virtuous taste will indeed be proportioned to the vividness with which they are formed, and the frequency with which they recur; yet some benefit will not fail to result from them even in their lowest degree.

The idea of the Supreme Being has this peculiar property: that, as it admits of no substitute, so, from the first moment it is formed, it is capable of continual growth and enlargement. God himself is immutable; but our conception of his character is continually receiving fresh accessions, is continually growing more extended and refulgent, by having transferred to it new elements of beauty and goodness; by attracting to itself, as a centre, whatever bears the impress of dignity, order, or happiness. It borrows splendour from all that is fair, subordinates to itself all that is great, and sits enthroned on the riches of he universe.

As the object of worship will always be, in a degree, the object of

imitation, hence arises a fixed standard of moral excellence; by the contemplation of which the tendencies to corruption are counteracted, the contagion of bad example is checked, and human nature rises above its natural level.

When the knowledge of God was lost in the world, just ideas of virtue and moral obligation disappeared along with it. How is it to be otherwise accounted for, that in the polished nations, and in the enlightened times of pagan antiquity, the most unnatural lusts and detestable impurities were not only tolerated in private life,* but entered into religion, and formed a material part of public worship;† while among the Jews, a people so much inferior in every other branch of knowledge, the same vices were regarded with horror?

The reason is this: the true character of God was unknown to the former, which by the light of Divine revelation was displayed to the latter. The former cast their deities in the mould of their own imaginations; in consequence of which they partook of the vices and defects of their worshippers. To the latter, no scope was left for the wanderings of fancy; but a pure and perfect model was prescribed.

False and corrupt, however, as was the religion of the pagans (if it deserve the name), and defective, and often vicious, as was the character of their imaginary deities, it was still better for the world that the void should be filled with these than abandoned to a total skepticism; for if both systems are equally false, they are not equally pernicious. When the fictions of heathenism consecrated the memory of its legislators and heroes, it invested them for the most part with those qualities which were in the greatest repute. They were supposed to possess in the highest degree the virtues in which it was most honourable to excel; and to be the witnesses, approvers, and patrons of those perfections in others by which their own character was chiefly distinguished. Men saw, or rather fancied they saw, in these supposed deities the qualities they most admired, dilated to a larger size, moving in a higher sphere, and associated with the power, dignity, and happiness of superior natures. With such ideal models before them, and conceiving themselves continually acting under the eye of such spectators and judges, they felt a real elevation; their eloquence became more impassioned, their patriotism inflamed, and their courage exalted.

Revelation, by displaying the true character of God, affords a pure and perfect standard of virtue; heathenism, one in many respects defective and vicious; the fashionable skepticism of the present day,

* It is worthy of observation, that the elegant and philosophic Xenophon, in delineating the model of a perfect prince in the character of Cyrus, introduces a Mede who had formed an unnatural passion for his hero; and relates the incident in a lively, festive humour, without being in the least conscious of any indelicacy attached to it. What must be the state of manners in a country where a circumstance of this kind, feigned, no doubt, by way of ornament, finds a place in such a work? —*Cyri Instit.* lib. i.

"Deinde nobis, qui, *concedentibus philosophis antiquis*, adolescentulis delectamur, etiam vitia sæpe jucunda sunt."—*Cicero De Nat. Dei*, lib. i.

† "—— *Nam quo non prostat fœmina templo?*"—Juv.

The impurities practised in the worship of Isis, an Egyptian deity, rose to such a height in the reign of Tiberius, that that profligate prince thought fit to prohibit her worship, and at the same time inflicted on her priests the punishment of crucifixion.—*Joseph. Antiq. Judaic.* lib. xviii.

which excludes the belief of all superior powers, affords no standard at all. Human nature knows nothing better or higher than itself. All above and around it being shrouded in darkness, and the prospect confined to the tame realities of life, virtue has no room upwards to expand; nor are any excursions permitted into that unseen world, the true element of the great and good, by which it is fortified with motives equally calculated to satisfy the reason, to delight the fancy, and to impress the heart.

2. Modern infidelity not only tends to corrupt the moral taste, it also promotes the growth of those vices which are the most hostile to social happiness. Of all the vices incident to human nature, the most destructive to society are vanity, ferocity, and unbridled sensuality; and these are precisely the vices which infidelity is calculated to cherish.

That the love, fear, and habitual contemplation of a Being infinitely exalted, or, in other words, devotion, is adapted to promote a sober and moderate estimate of our own excellences, is incontestable; nor is it less evident that the exclusion of such sentiments must be favourable to pride. The criminality of pride will, perhaps, be less readily admitted; for though there is no vice so opposite to the spirit of Christianity, yet there is none which, even in the Christian world, has, under various pretences, been treated with so much indulgence.

There is, it will be confessed, a delicate sensibility to character, a sober desire of reputation, a wish to possess the esteem of the wise and good, felt by the purest minds, which is at the farthest remove from arrogance or vanity. The humility of a noble mind scarcely dares to approve of itself, until it has secured the approbation of others. Very different is that restless desire of distinction, that passion for theatrical display, which inflames the heart and occupies the whole attention of vain men. This, of all the passions, is the most unsocial, avarice itself not excepted. The reason is plain. Property is a kind of good which may be more easily attained, and is capable of more minute subdivisions than fame. In the pursuit of wealth, men are led by an attention to their own interest to promote the welfare of each other; their advantages are reciprocal; the benefits which each is anxious to acquire for himself he reaps in the greatest abundance from the union and conjunction of society. The pursuits of vanity are quite contrary. The portion of time and attention mankind are willing to spare from their avocations and pleasures to devote to the admiration of each other is so small, that every successful adventurer is felt to have impaired the common stock. The success of one is the disappointment of multitudes. For though there be many rich, many virtuous, many wise men, fame must necessarily be the portion of but few. Hence every vain man, every man in whom vanity is the ruling passion, regarding his rival as his enemy, is strongly tempted to rejoice in his miscarriage, and repine at his success.

Besides, as the passions are seldom seen in a simple, unmixed state, so vanity, when it succeeds, degenerates into arrogance; when it is disappointed (and it is often disappointed), it is exasperated into

malignity, and corrupted into envy. In this stage the vain man commences a determined misanthropist. He detests that excellence which he cannot reach. He detests his species, and longs to be revenged for the unpardonable injustice he has sustained in their insensibility to his merits. He lives upon the calamities of the world; the vices and miseries of men are his element and his food. Virtues, talents, and genius are his natural enemies, which he persecutes with instinctive eagerness and unrelenting hostility. There are who doubt the existence of such a disposition; but it certainly issues out of the dregs of disappointed vanity: a disease which taints and vitiates the whole character wherever it prevails. It forms the heart to such a profound indifference to the welfare of others, that, whatever appearances he may assume, or however wide the circle of his seeming virtues may extend, you will infallibly find the vain man is his own centre. Attentive only to himself, absorbed in the contemplation of his own perfections, instead of feeling tenderness for his fellow-creatures as members of the same family, as beings with whom he is appointed to act, to suffer, and to sympathize,—he considers life as a stage on which he is performing a part, and mankind in no other light than spectators. Whether he smiles or frowns, whether his path is adorned with the rays of beneficence, or his steps are died in blood, an attention to self is the spring of every movement, and the motive to which every action is referred.

His apparent good qualities lose all their worth, by losing all that is simple, genuine, and natural: they are even pressed into the service of vanity, and become the means of enlarging its power. The truly good man is jealous over himself lest the notoriety of his best actions, by blending itself with their motive, should diminish their value; the vain man performs the same actions for the sake of that notoriety. The good man quietly discharges his duty, and shuns ostentation; the vain man considers every good deed lost that is not publicly displayed. The one is intent upon realities, the other upon semblances: the one aims to *be* virtuous, the other to *appear* so.

Nor is a mind inflated with vanity more disqualified for right action than just speculation, or better disposed to the pursuit of truth than the practice of virtue. To such a mind the simplicity of truth is disgusting. Careless of the improvement of mankind, and intent only upon astonishing with the appearance of novelty, the glare of paradox will be preferred to the light of truth; opinions will be embraced, not because they are just, but because they are new: the more flagitious, the more subversive of morals, the more alarming to the wise and good, the more welcome to men who estimate their literary powers by the mischief they produce, and who consider the anxiety and terror they impress as the measure of their renown. Truth is simple and uniform, while error may be infinitely varied: and as it is one thing to start paradoxes, and another to make discoveries, we need the less wonder at the prodigious increase of modern philosophers.

We have been so much accustomed to consider extravagant self-estimation merely as a *ridiculous* quality, that many will be surprised

to find it treated as a vice pregnant with serious mischief to society But, to form a judgment of its influence on the manners and happiness of a nation, it is necessary only to look at its effects in a family; for bodies of men are only collections of individuals, and the greatest nation is nothing more than an aggregate of a number of families. Conceive of a domestic circle, in which each member is elated with a most extravagant opinion of himself, and a proportionable contempt of every other; is full of little contrivances to catch applause, and whenever he is not praised is sullen and disappointed. What a picture of disunion, disgust, and animosity would such a family present! How utterly would domestic affection be extinguished, and all the purposes of domestic society be defeated! The general prevalence of such dispositions must be accompanied by an equal proportion of general misery. The tendency of pride to produce strife and hatred is sufficiently apparent from the pains men have been at to construct a system of politeness, which is nothing more than a sort of mimic humility, in which the sentiments of an offensive self-estimation are so far disguised and suppressed as to make them compatible with the spirit of society; such a mode of behaviour as would naturally result from an attention to the apostolic injunction: *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but, in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves.* But if the semblance be of such importance, how much more useful the reality! If the mere garb of humility be of such indispensable necessity that without it society could not subsist, how much better still would the harmony of the world be preserved, were the condescension, deference, and respect so studiously displayed a true picture of the heart!

The same restless and eager vanity which disturbs a family, when it is permitted in a great national crisis to mingle with political affairs, distracts a kingdom; infusing into those intrusted with the enaction of laws a spirit of rash innovation and daring empiricism, a disdain of the established usages of mankind, a foolish desire to dazzle the world with new and untried systems of policy, in which the precedents of antiquity and the experience of ages are only consulted to be trodden under foot; and into the executive department of government, a fierce contention for pre-eminence, an incessant struggle to supplant and destroy, with a propensity to calumny and suspicion, proscription and massacre.

We shall suffer the most eventful season ever witnessed in the affairs of men to pass over our heads to very little purpose, if we fail to learn from it some awful lessons on the nature and progress of the passions. The true light in which the French revolution ought to be contemplated is that of a grand experiment on human nature. Among the various passions which that revolution has so strikingly displayed, none is more conspicuous than vanity; nor is it less difficult, without adverting to the national character of the people, to account for its extraordinary predominance. Political power, the most seducing object of ambition, never before circulated through so many hands; the prospect of possessing it was never before presented to so many

minds. Multitudes, who, by their birth and education, and not unfrequently by their talents, seemed destined to perpetual obscurity, were by the alternate rise and fall of parties elevated into distinction, and shared in the functions of government. The short-lived forms of power and office glided with such rapidity through successive ranks of degradation, from the court to the very dregs of the populace, that they seemed rather to solicit acceptance than to be a prize contended for.* Yet, as it was still impossible for all to possess authority, though none were willing to obey, a general impatience to break the ranks and rush into the foremost ground maddened and infuriated the nation, and overwhelmed law, order, and civilization, with the violence of a torrent.

If such be the mischiefs both in public and private life resulting from an excessive self-estimation, it remains next to be considered whether Providence has supplied any medicine to correct it; for as the reflection on excellences, whether real or imaginary, is always attended with pleasure to the possessor, it is a disease deeply seated in our nature.

Suppose there were a great and glorious Being always present with us, who had given us existence, with numberless other blessings, and on whom we depended each instant, as well for every present enjoyment as for every future good; suppose, again, we had incurred the just displeasure of such a Being by ingratitude and disobedience, yet that in great mercy he had not cast us off, but had assured us he was willing to pardon and restore us on our humble entreaty and sincere repentance; say, would not an habitual sense of the presence of this Being, self-reproach for having displeased him, and an anxiety to recover his favour, be the most effectual antidote to pride? But such are the leading discoveries made by the Christian revelation, and such the dispositions which a practical belief of it inspires.

Humility is the first fruit of religion. In the mouth of our Lord there is no maxim so frequent as the following: *Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* Religion, and that alone, teaches *absolute* humility; by which I mean a sense of our *absolute* nothingness in the view of infinite greatness and excellence. That sense of inferiority which results from the comparison of men with each other is often an unwelcome sentiment forced upon the mind, which may rather imbitter the temper than soften it: that which devotion impresses is soothing and delightful The devout man loves to lie low at the footstool of his Creator, because it is then he attains the most lively perceptions of the divine excellence, and the most tranquil confidence in the divine favour. In so august a presence he sees all distinctions lost, and all beings reduced to the same level. He looks at his superiors without envy, and his inferiors without contempt: and when from this elevation he descends to mix in society, the conviction of superiority which most

* —— "Æquo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas
Regumque turres."—*Hor.*

in many instances be felt is a calm inference of the understanding, and no longer a busy, importunate passion of the heart.

The wicked (says the Psalmist) *through the pride of their countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all their thoughts.* When we consider the incredible vanity of the atheistical sect, together with the settled malignity and unrelenting rancour with which they pursue every vestige of religion, is it uncandid to suppose that its humbling tendency is one principal cause of their enmity; that they are eager to displace a Deity from the minds of men, that they may occupy the void; to crumble the throne of the Eternal into dust, that they may elevate themselves on its ruins; and that, as their licentiousness is impatient of restraint, so their pride disdains a superior?

We mentioned a ferocity of character as one effect of skeptical impiety. It is an inconvenience attending a controversy with those with whom we have few principles in common, that we are often in danger of reasoning inconclusively, for the want of its being clearly known and settled what our opponents admit, and what they deny. The persons, for example, with whom we are at present engaged have discarded humility and modesty from the catalogue of virtues; on which account we have employed the more time in evincing their importance: but whatever may be thought of humility as a *virtue*, it surely will not be denied that inhumanity is a most detestable *vice;* a vice, however, which skepticism has a most powerful tendency to inflame.

As we have already shown that pride hardens the heart, and that religion is the only effectual antidote, the connexion between irreligion and inhumanity is in this view obvious. But there is another light in which this part of the subject may be viewed, in my humble opinion, much more important, though seldom adverted to. The supposition that man is a moral and accountable being, destined to survive the stroke of death, and to live in a future world in a never-ending state of happiness or misery, makes him a creature of incomparably more *consequence* than the opposite supposition. When we consider him as placed here by an Almighty Ruler in a state of probation, and that the present life is his period of trial, the first link in a vast and interminable chain which stretches into eternity, he assumes a dignified character in our eyes. Every thing which relates to him becomes interesting; and to trifle with his happiness is felt to be the most unpardonable levity. If such be the destination of man, it is evident that in the qualities which fit him for it his principal dignity consists: his moral greatness is his true greatness. Let the skeptical principles be admitted, which represent him, on the contrary, as the offspring of chance, connected with no superior power, and sinking into annihilation at death, and he is a contemptible creature, whose existence and happiness are insignificant. The characteristic difference is lost between him and the brute creation, from which he is no longer distinguished, except by the vividness and multiplicity of his perceptions.

If we reflect on that part of our nature which disposes us to humanity, we shall find, that where we have no particular attachment

our sympathy with the sufferings and concern for the destruction of sensitive beings are in proportion to their supposed importance in the general scale; or, in other words, to their supposed capacity of enjoyment. We feel, for example, much more at witnessing the destruction of a man than of an inferior animal, because we consider it as involving the extinction of a much greater sum of happiness. For the same reason he who would shudder at the slaughter of a large animal will see a thousand insects perish without a pang. Our sympathy with the calamities of our fellow-creatures is adjusted to the same proportions; for we feel more powerfully affected with the distresses of fallen greatness than with equal or greater distresses sustained by persons of inferior rank; because, having been accustomed to associate with an elevated station the idea of superior happiness, the loss appears the greater, and the wreck more extensive. But the disproportion in importance between man and the meanest insect is not so great as that which subsists between man considered as *mortal* and as *immortal;* that is, between man as he is represented by the system of skepticism, and that of divine revelation: for the enjoyment of the meanest insect bears some proportion, though a very small one, to the present happiness of man; but the happiness of time bears none at all to that of eternity. The skeptical system, therefore, sinks the importance of human existence to an inconceivable degree.

From these principles results the following important inference—that to extinguish human life by the hand of violence must be quite a different thing in the eyes of a skeptic from what it is in those of a Christian. With the skeptic it is nothing more than diverting the course of a little red fluid, called blood; it is merely lessening the number by one of many millions of fugitive contemptible creatures. The Christian sees in the same event an accountable being cut off from a state of probation, and hurried, perhaps unprepared, into the presence of his Judge, to hear that final, that irrevocable sentence, which is to fix him for ever in an unalterable condition of felicity or wo. The former perceives in death nothing but its physical circumstances; the latter is impressed with the magnitude of its moral consequences. It is the moral relation which man is supposed to bear to a superior power, the awful idea of accountability, the influence which his present dispositions and actions are conceived to have upon his eternal destiny, more than any superiority of intellectual powers abstracted from these considerations, which invest him with such mysterious grandeur, and constitute the firmest guard on the sanctuary of human life. This reasoning, it is true, serves more *immediately* to show how the disbelief of a future state endangers the security of life; but though this be its *direct* consequence, it extends by analogy much further, since he who has learned to sport with the *lives* of his fellow-creatures will feel but little solicitude for their welfare in any other instance; but, as the greater includes the less, will easily pass from this to all the inferior gradations of barbarity.

As the advantage of the armed over the unarmed is not seen till the moment of attack, so in that tranquil state of society in which law and

order maintain their ascendency, it is not perceived, perhaps not even suspected, to what an alarming degree the principles of modern infidelity leave us naked and defenceless. But let the state be convulsed let the mounds of regular authority be once overflowed, and the still small voice of law drowned in the tempest of popular fury (events which recent experience shows to be possible), it will then be seen that atheism is a school of ferocity; and that, having taught its disciples to consider mankind as little better than a nest of insects, they will be prepared in the fierce conflicts of party to trample upon them without pity, and extinguish them without remorse.

It was late* before the atheism of Epicurus gained footing at Rome; but its prevalence was soon followed by such scenes of proscription, confiscation, and blood, as were *then* unparalleled in the history of the world; from which the republic being never able to recover itself, after many unsuccessful struggles, exchanged liberty for repose, by submission to absolute power. Such were the effects of atheism at Rome. An attempt has been recently made to establish a similar system in France, the consequences of which are too well known to render it requisite for me to shock your feelings by a recital. The only doubt that can arise is, whether the barbarities which have stained the revolution in that unhappy country are justly chargeable on the prevalence of atheism. Let those who doubt of this recollect that the men who, by their activity and talents, prepared the minds of the people for that great change—*Voltaire*, *D'Alembert*, *Diderot*, *Rousseau*, and others—were avowed enemies of revelation; that in all their writings the diffusion of skepticism and revolutionary principles went hand in hand; that the fury of the most sanguinary parties was especially pointed against the Christian priesthood and religious institutions, without once pretending, like other persecutors, to execute the vengeance of God (whose name they never mentioned) upon his enemies; that their atrocities were committed with a wanton levity and brutal merriment; that the reign of atheism was avowedly and expressly the reign of terror; that in the full madness of their career, in the highest climax of their horrors, they shut up the temples of God, abolished his worship, and proclaimed death to be an eternal sleep; as if by pointing to the silence of the sepulchre, and the sleep of the dead, these ferocious barbarians meant to apologize for leaving neither sleep, quiet, nor repose to the living.

As the heathens fabled that Minerva issued full armed from the head of Jupiter, so no sooner were the speculations of atheistical philosophy matured, than they gave birth to a ferocity which converted the most polished people in Europe into a horde of assassins; the seat of voluptuous refinement, of pleasure, and of arts, into a theatre of blood.

Having already shown that the principles of infidelity facilitate the commission of crimes, by removing the restraints of fear; and that they foster the arrogance of the individual, while they inculcate the

* "Neque enim assentior iis qui *hæc nuper* disserere cœperunt, cum corporibus simul animæ interire atque omnia morte deleri."—*Cicero de Amicitia.*

most despicable opinion of the species; the inevitable result is, that a haughty self-confidence, a contempt of mankind, together with a daring defiance of religious restraints, are the natural ingredients of the atheistical character; nor is it less evident that these are, of all others, the dispositions which most forcibly stimulate to violence and cruelty.

Settle it therefore in your minds, as a maxim never to be effaced or forgotten, that atheism is an inhuman, bloody, ferocious system, equally hostile to every useful restraint and to every virtuous affection; that, leaving nothing above us to excite awe, nor round us to awaken tenderness, it wages war with heaven and with earth: its first object is to dethrone God, its next to destroy man.*

There is a third vice, not less destructive to society than either of those which have been already mentioned, to which the system of modern infidelity is favourable; that is, unbridled sensuality, the licentious and unrestrained indulgence of those passions which are essential to the continuation of the species. The magnitude of these passions, and their supreme importance to the existence as well as the peace and welfare of society, have rendered it one of the first objects of solicitude with every wise legislator to restrain them by such laws, and to confine their indulgence within such limits, as shall best promote the great ends for which they were implanted.

The benevolence and wisdom of the Author of Christianity are eminently conspicuous in the laws he has enacted on this branch of morals; for, while he authorizes marriage, he restrains the vagrancy and caprice of the passions, by forbidding polygamy and divorce; and, well knowing that offences against the laws of chastity usually spring from an ill-regulated imagination, he inculcates purity of heart. Among innumerable benefits which the world has derived from the Christian religion, a superior refinement in the sexual sentiments, a more equal and respectful treatment of women, greater dignity and permanence conferred on the institution of marriage, are not the least considerable; in consequence of which the purest affections and the most sacred duties are grafted on the stock of the strongest instincts.

The aim of all the leading champions of infidelity is to rob mankind of these benefits, and throw them back into a state of gross and brutal sensuality. In this spirit, Mr. Hume represents the private conduct of the profligate Charles, whose debaucheries polluted the age, as a just subject of panegyric. A disciple in the same school has lately had the unblushing effrontery to stigmatize marriage as the worst of all monopolies; and, in a narrative of his licentious amours, to make a formal apology for departing from his principles, by submitting to its restraints. The popular productions on the Continent which issue from the atheistical school are incessantly directed to the same purpose.

Under every possible aspect in which infidelity can be viewed, i

* As human nature is the same in all ages, it is not surprising to find the same moral systems, even in the most dissimilar circumstances, produce corresponding effects. Josephus remarks that the Sadducees, a kind of Jewish infidels, whose tenets were the denial of a moral government and a future state, were distinguished from the other sects by their ferocity.—*De Bell. Jud.* lib. ii. He elsewhere remarks, that they were eminent for their inhumanity in their judicial capacity

extends the dominion of sensuality: it repeals and abrogates every law by which divine revelation has, under such awful sanctions, restrained the indulgence of the passions. The disbelief of a supreme, omniscient Being, which it inculcates, releases its disciples from an attention to the *heart*, from every care but the preservation of outward decorum; and the exclusion of the devout affections and an unseen world leaves the mind immersed in visible, sensible objects.

There are two sorts of pleasures,—corporeal and mental. Though we are indebted to the senses for all our perceptions *originally*, yet those which are at the farthest remove from their *immediate impressions* confer the most elevation on the character, since in proportion as they are multiplied and augmented, the slavish subjection to the senses is subdued. Hence the true and only antidote to debasing sensuality is the possession of a fund of that *kind of enjoyment* which is independent of the corporeal appetites. Inferior in the perfection of several of his senses to different parts of the brute creation, the superiority of man over them all consists in his superior power of multiplying by new combinations his mental perceptions, and thereby of creating to himself resources of happiness separate from external sensation. In the scale of enjoyment, at the first remove from sense are the pleasures of reason and society; at the next are the pleasures of devotion and religion. The former, though totally distinct from those of sense, are yet less perfectly adapted to moderate their excesses than the last, as they are in a great measure conversant with visible and sensible objects.—The religious affections and sentiments are, in fact, and were intended to be, the *proper antagonist* of sensuality, —the great deliverer from the thraldom of the appetites, by opening a spiritual world, and inspiring hopes and fears, and consolations and joys, which bear no relation to the material and sensible universe. The criminal indulgence of sensual passions admits but of two modes of prevention; the establishment of such laws and maxims in society as shall render lewd profligacy impracticable or infamous, or the infusion of such principles and habits as shall render it distasteful. Human legislatures have encountered the disease in the first, the truths and sanctions of revealed religion in the last of these methods: to both of which the advocates of modern infidelity are equally hostile.

So much has been said by many able writers to evince the inconceivable benefit of the marriage institution, that to hear it seriously attacked by men who style themselves philosophers, at the close of the eighteenth century, must awaken indignation and surprise. The object of this discourse leads us to direct our attention particularly to the influence of this institution on the *civilization* of the world.

From the records of revelation we learn that marriage, or the *permanent union* of the sexes, was ordained by God, and existed, under different modifications, in the early infancy of mankind, without which they could never have emerged from barbarism. For, conceive only what eternal discord, jealousy, and violence would ensue, were the objects of the tenderest affections secured to their possessor by no law or tie of moral obligation: were domestic enjoyments disturbed by

incessant fear, and licentiousness inflamed by hope. Who could find sufficient tranquillity of mind to enable him to plan or execute any continued scheme of action, or what room for arts or sciences, or religion, or virtue, in that state in which the chief earthly happiness was exposed to every lawless invader; where one was racked with an incessant anxiety to keep what the other was equally eager to acquire? It is not probable in itself, independent of the light of scripture, that the benevolent Author of the human race ever placed them in so wretched a condition at first: it is certain they could not remain in it long without being exterminated. Marriage, by shutting out these evils, and enabling every man to rest secure in his enjoyments, is the great civilizer of the world: with this security the mind is at liberty to expand in generous affections, and has leisure to look abroad, and engage in the pursuits of knowledge, science, and virtue.

Nor is it in this way only that marriage institutions are essential to the welfare of mankind. They are sources of tenderness, as well as the guardians of peace. Without the permanent union of the sexes there can be no permanent families: the dissolution of nuptial ties involves the dissolution of domestic society. But domestic society is the seminary of social affections, the cradle of sensibility, where the first elements are acquired of that tenderness and humanity which cement mankind together; and were they entirely extinguished, the whole fabric of social institutions would be dissolved.

Families are so many centres of attraction, which preserve mankind from being scattered and dissipated by the repulsive powers of selfishness. The order of nature is evermore from particulars to generals. As in the operations of intellect we proceed from the contemplation of individuals to the formation of general abstractions, so in the development of the passions, in like manner, we advance from private to public affections; from the love of parents, brothers, and sisters, to those more expanded regards which embrace the immense society of human kind.*

In order to render men benevolent, they must first be made tender: for benevolent affections are not the offspring of reasoning; they result from that culture of the heart, from those early impressions of tenderness, gratitude, and sympathy, which the endearments of domestic life are sure to supply, and for the formation of which it is the best possible school.

The advocates of infidelity invert this eternal order of nature. Instead of inculcating the private affections, as a discipline by which the mind is prepared for those of a more public nature, they set them in direct opposition to each other, they propose to build general benevolence on the destruction of individual tenderness, and to make us love the whole species more by loving every particular part of it less. In pursuit of this chimerical project, gratitude, humility, conjugal, pa-

* "Arctior vero colligatio est societatis propinquorum: ab illa enim immensa societate humani generis, in exiguum angustumque concluditur. Nam cum sit hoc natura commune animantium, ut habeant lubidinem procreandi, prima societas in ipso conjugio est; proxima in liberis; deinde una domus, communia omnia. Id autem est principium urbis, et quasi seminarium reipublicæ. *Cic de Off* lib. i. cap. 17.

rental, and filial affection, together with every other social disposition, are reprobated—virtue is limited to a passionate attachment to the general good. Is it not natural to ask, when all the tenderness of life is extinguished, and all the bands of society are untwisted, from whence this ardent affection for the general good is to spring?

When this savage philosophy has completed its work, when it has taught its disciple to look with perfect indifference on the offspring of his body and the wife of his bosom, to estrange himself from his friends, insult his benefactors, and silence the pleadings of gratitude and pity; will he, by thus divesting himself of all that is human, be better prepared for the disinterested love of his species? Will he become a philanthropist only because he has ceased to be a man? Rather, in this total exemption from all the feelings which humanize and soften, in this chilling frost of universal indifference, may we not be certain that selfishness unmingled and uncontrolled will assume the empire of his heart; and that under pretence of advancing the general good, an object to which the fancy may give innumerable shapes, he will be prepared for the violation of every duty, and the perpetration of every crime? Extended benevolence is the last and most perfect fruit of the private affections; so that to expect to reap the former from the extinction of the latter, is to oppose the means to the end; is as absurd as to attempt to reach the summit of the highest mountain without passing through the intermediate spaces, or to hope to attain the heights of science by forgetting the first elements of knowledge. These absurdities have sprung, however, in the advocates of infidelity, from an ignorance of human nature sufficient to disgrace even those who did not style themselves philosophers. Presuming, contrary to the experience of every moment, that the affections are awakened by *reasoning*, and perceiving that the general good is an incomparably greater object *in itself* than the happiness of any limited number of individuals, they inferred nothing more was necessary than to exhibit it in its just dimensions, to draw the *affections* towards it; as though the fact of the superior populousness of China to Great Britain needed but to be known to render us indifferent to our domestic concerns, and lead us to direct all our anxiety to the prosperity of that vast but remote empire.

It is not the province of reason to awaken new passions, or open new sources of sensibility: but to direct us in the attainment of those objects which nature has already rendered pleasing, or to determine among the interfering inclinations and passions which sway the mind, which are the fittest to be preferred.

Is a regard to the general good then, you will reply, to be excluded from the motives of action? Nothing is more remote from my intention: but as the nature of this motive has, in my opinion, been much misunderstood by some good men, and abused by others of a different description to the worst of purposes, permit me to declare, in a few words, what appears to me to be the truth on this subject.

The welfare of the whole system of being must be allowed to be, *in itself*, the object of all others the most worthy of being pursued; so

that, could the mind distinctly embrace it, and discern at every step *what action* would infallibly promote it, we should be furnished with a sure criterion of right and wrong, an unerring guide, which would supersede the use and necessity of all inferior rules, laws, and principles.

But this being impossible, since the good of the *whole* is a motive so loose and indeterminate, and embraces such an infinity of relations that before we could be certain what action it prescribed, the season of action would be past; to weak, short-sighted mortals Providence has assigned a sphere of agency less grand and extensive indeed, but better suited to their limited powers, by implanting certain *affections* which it is their duty to cultivate, and suggesting particular rules to which they are bound to conform. By these provisions the boundaries of virtue are easily ascertained, at the same time that its ultimate object, the good of the whole, is secured; for, since the happiness of the entire system results from the happiness of the several parts, the affections, which confine the attention *immediately* to the latter, conspire in the end to the promotion of the former; as the labourer, whose industry is limited to a corner of a large building, performs his part towards rearing the structure much more effectually than if he extended his care to the whole.

As the interest, however, of any limited number of persons may not only not contribute, but may possibly be directly opposed to the general good (the interest of a family, for example, to that of a province, or of a nation to that of the world), Providence has so ordered it, that in a well-regulated mind there springs up, besides particular attachments, *an extended regard to the species*, whose office is twofold: not to *destroy* and *extinguish* the more private affections, which is mental parricide; but first, as far as is consistent with the claims of those who are immediately committed to our care, *to do good to all men;* secondly, to exercise a jurisdiction and control over the private affections, so as to prohibit their indulgence whenever it would be attended with *manifest detriment* to the whole. Thus every part of our nature is brought into action; all the practical principles of the human heart find an element to move in, each in its different sort and manner conspiring, without mutual collisions, to maintain the harmony of the world and the happiness of the universe.*

* It is somewhat singular, that many of the fashionable infidels have hit upon a definition of virtue which perfectly coincides with that of certain metaphysical divines in America, first invented and defended by that most acute reasoner, JONATHAN EDWARDS. They both place virtue exclusively in a passion for the general good; or, as Mr. Edwards expresses it, *love to being in general;* so that our love is always to be proportioned to the magnitude of its object in the scale of being, which is liable to the objections I have already stated, as well as to many others which the limits of this note will not permit me to enumerate. Let it suffice to remark, (1.) That virtue, on these principles, is an utter impossibility: for the system of being, comprehending the great Supreme, is *infinite:* and, therefore, to maintain the proper proportion, the force of particular attachment must be infinitely less than the passion for the general good; but the limits of the human mind are not capable of any emotion so infinitely different *in degree.* (2.) Since *our views* of the extent of the universe are capable of perpetual enlargement, admitting the sum of existence is ever the same, we must return back at each step to diminish the strength of particular affections, or they will become disproportionate; and consequently, on these principles, vicious; so that the balance must be continually fluctuating, by the weights being taken out of one scale and put into the other. (3.) If virtue consist *exclusively* in love to being in general, or attachment to the general good, the particular affections are, to every purpose of virtue, useless, and even pernicious; for their immediate

Before I close this discourse, I cannot omit to mention three circumstances attending the propagation of infidelity by its present abetters, equally new and alarming.

1. It is the first attempt which has been ever witnessed, on an extensive scale, to establish *the principles of atheism;* the first effort which history has recorded to disannul and extinguish the belief of all superior powers; the consequence of which, should it succeed, would be to place mankind in a situation never before experienced, not even during the ages of pagan darkness. The system of polytheism was as remote from modern infidelity as from true religion. Amid that rubbish of superstition, the product of fear, ignorance, and vice, which had been accumulating for ages, some faint embers of sacred truth remained unextinguished; the interposition of unseen powers in the affairs of men was believed and revered, the sanctity of oaths was maintained, the idea of *revelation* and of *tradition* as a source of religious knowledge was familiar; a useful persuasion of the existence of a future world was kept alive, and the greater gods were looked up to as the guardians of the public welfare, the patrons of those virtues which promote the prosperity of states, and the avengers of injustice, perfidy, and fraud.*

nay, their necessary tendency is to attract to their objects a proportion of attention which far exceeds their comparative value in the general scale. To allege that the *general good* is promoted by them will be of no advantage to the defence of this system, but the contrary, by confessing that a greater sum of happiness is attained by a deviation from, than an adherence to, its principles; unless its advocates mean by the love of being in general the same thing as the private affections, which is to confound all the distinctions of language, as well as all the operations of mind. Let it be remembered, we have no dispute respecting what is the ultimate end of virtue, which is allowed on both sides to be the greatest sum of happiness in the universe. The question is merely, what is *virtue itself?* or, in other words, what are the means appointed for the attainment of that end?

There is little doubt, from some parts of Mr. Godwin's work entitled "Political Justice," as well as from his early habits of reading, that he was indebted to Mr. Edwards for his principal arguments against the private affections; though, with a daring consistence, he has pursued his principles to an extreme from which that most excellent man would have revolted with horror. The fundamental error of the whole system arose, as I conceive, from a mistaken pursuit of simplicity: from a wish to construct a moral system, without leaving sufficient scope for the infinite variety of moral phenomena and mental combination; in consequence of which its advocates were induced to place virtue *exclusively* in some *one disposition* of mind: and, since the passion for the general good is undeniably the *noblest* and most extensive of all others, when it was once resolved to place virtue in any *one thing*, there remained little room to hesitate which should be preferred. It might have been worth while to reflect, that in the natural world there are two kinds of attraction; one, which holds the several *parts* of individual bodies in contact; another, which maintains the union of bodies themselves with the general system: and that, though the union in the former case is much more *intimate* than in the latter, each is equally essential to the order of the world. Similar to this is the relation which the public and private affections bear to each other, and their use in the moral system.

* The testimony of Polybius to the beneficial effects which resulted from the system of pagan superstition, in fortifying the sentiments of moral obligation, and supporting the sanctity of oaths, is so weighty and decisive, that it would be an injustice to the subject not to insert it; more especially as it is impossible to attribute it to the influence of credulity on the author himself, who was evidently a skeptic. It is scarcely necessary to remark, that all the benefits which might in any way flow from superstition, are secured to an incomparably greater degree by the belief of true religion

"But among all the useful institutions," says Polybius, "that demonstrate the superior excellence of the Roman government, the most considerable, perhaps, is the opinion which people are taught to hold concerning the gods: and that which other men regard as an object of disgrace appears, in my judgment, to be the very thing by which this republic is chiefly sustained. I mean superstition, which is impressed with all its terrors, and influences the private actions of the citizens and the public administration of the state, to a degree that can scarcely be exceeded.

"The ancients, therefore, acted not absurdly, nor without good reason, when they inculcated the notions concerning the gods, and the belief of infernal punishments; but much rather *are those of the present age to be charged with rashness and absurdity*, in endeavouring to extirpate these opinions; for, not to mention other effects that flow from such an institution, if among the Greeks, for example, a single talent only be intrusted to those who have the management of any of the public money, though they give ten written sureties, with as many seals, and twice as many witnesses, they are unable to discharge the trust reposed in them with integrity. But the Romans, on

Of whatever benefit superstition might formerly be productive, by the scattered particles of truth which it contained, these advantages can now only be reaped from the soil of true religion; nor is there any other alternative left than the belief of Christianity, or absolute atheism. In the revolutions of the human mind, exploded *opinions* are often revived; but an exploded superstition never recovers its credit. The pretension to divine revelation is so august and commanding, that when its falsehood is once discerned, it is covered with all the ignominy of detected imposture; it falls from such a height (to change the figure) that it is inevitably crumbled into atoms. Religions, whether false or true, are not creatures of arbitrary institution. After discrediting the principles of piety, should our modern freethinkers find it necessary, in order to restrain the excesses of ferocity, to seek for a substitute in some popular superstition, it will prove a vain and impracticable attempt: they may recall the names, restore the altars, and revive the ceremonies; but to rekindle the spirit of heathenism will exceed their power; because it is impossible to enact ignorance by law, or to repeal by legislative authority the dictates of reason and the light of science.

2. The efforts of infidels to diffuse the principles of infidelity among the common people is another alarming symptom peculiar to the present time. Hume, Bolingbroke, and Gibbon addressed themselves solely to the more polished classes of the community, and would have thought their refined speculations debased by an attempt to enlist disciples from among the populace. Infidelity has lately grown condescending; bred in the speculations of a daring philosophy, immured at first in the cloisters of the learned, and afterward nursed in the lap of voluptuousness and of courts; having at length reached its full maturity, it boldly ventures to challenge the suffrages of the people, solicits the acquaintance of peasants and mechanics, and seeks to draw whole nations to its standard.

It is not difficult to account for this new state of things. While infidelity was rare, it was employed as the instrument of literary vanity; its wide diffusion having disqualified it for answering that purpose, it is now adopted as the organ of political convulsion. Literary distinction is conferred by the approbation of a few; but the total

the other hand, who in the course of their magistracies and in embassies disburse the greatest sums, are prevailed on by the single obligation of an oath to perform their duty with inviolable honesty. And as in other states a man is rarely to be found whose hands are pure from public robbery, so among the Romans it is no less rare to discover one that is tainted with this crime."—*Hampton's Polybius*, vol. iii. book vi.

Though the system of paganism is justly condemned by reason and scripture, yet it assumed as true several principles of the first importance to the preservation of public manners; such as a persuasion of invisible power, of the folly of incurring the divine vengeance for the attainment of any present advantage, and the divine approbation of virtue: so that, strictly speaking, it was the mixture of truth in it which gave it all its utility, which is well stated by the *great and judicious* Hooker in treating on this subject. "Seeing, therefore, it doth thus appear," says that venerable author, "that the safety of all states dependeth upon religion; that religion, unfeignedly loved, perfecteth men's abilities unto all kinds of virtuous services in the commonwealth; that men's desire is, in general, to hold no religion but the true; and that whatever good effects do grow out of their religion, who embrace, instead of the true, a false, the roots thereof are certain sparks of the light of truth intermingled with the darkness of error: because no religion can wholly and only consist of untruths, we have reason to think that all true virtues are to honour *true religion* as their parent, and all well-ordered commonweals to love her as their chiefest stay."—*Eccles. Pol.* book v

subversion and overthrow of society demands the concurrence of millions.

3. The infidels of the present day are the first sophists who have presumed to innovate in the very *substance* of morals. The disputes on moral questions hitherto agitated among philosophers have respected the *grounds* of duty, not the *nature of duty itself;* or they have been merely metaphysical, and related to the *history* of moral sentiments in the mind, the sources and principles from which they were most easily deduced; they never turned on the quality of those dispositions and actions which were to be denominated virtuous. In the firm persuasion that the love and fear of the Supreme Being, the sacred observation of promises and oaths, reverence to magistrates, obedience to parents, gratitude to benefactors, conjugal fidelity, and parental tenderness were primary virtues, and the chief support of every commonwealth, they were unanimous. The curse denounced upon such as remove ancient landmarks, upon those who call good evil, and evil good, put light for darkness, and darkness for light, who employ their faculties to subvert the eternal distinctions of right and wrong, and thus to poison the streams of virtue at their source, falls with accumulated weight on the advocates of modern infidelity, and on them alone.

Permit me to close this discourse with a few serious reflections.—There is much, it must be confessed, in the apostacy of multitudes, and the rapid progress of infidelity, to awaken our fears for the virtue of the rising generation; but nothing to shake our faith,—nothing which Scripture itself does not give us room to expect. The features which compose the character of apostates, their profaneness, presumption, lewdness, impatience of subordination, restless appetite for change, vain pretensions to freedom and to emancipate the world, while themselves are the slaves of lust, the weapons with which they attack Christianity, and the snares they spread for the unwary, are depicted in the clearest colours by the pencil of prophecy: *Knowing this first* (says Peter), *that there shall come in the last days scoffers walking after their own lusts.** In the same epistle he more fully describes the persons he alludes to; *as chiefly them which walk after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government; presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities; sporting themselves in their own deceivings, having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: for when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error; while they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption.*† Of the same characters Jude admonishes us *to remember that they were foretold as mockers who should be in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they* (he adds) *who separate themselves* (by apostacy), *sensual, not having the Spirit.* Infidelity is an evil of short duration

* 2 Pet. iii 3 † 2 Pet. ii 10, &c

"*It has* (as a judicious writer observes), *no individual subsistence given it in the system of prophecy. It is not a* BEAST,—*but a mere putrid excrescence of the papal beast: an excrescence which, though it may diffuse death through every vein of the body on which it grew, yet shall die along with it.*"* Its enormities will hasten its overthrow. It is impossible that a system which, by vilifying every virtue, and embracing the patronage of almost every vice and crime, wages war with all the order and civilization of the world; which, equal to the establishment of nothing, is armed only with the energies of destruction, can long retain an ascendency. It is in no shape formed for perpetuity. Sudden in its rise and impetuous in its progress; it resembles a mountain-torrent, which is loud, filthy, and desolating; but, being fed by no perennial spring, is soon drained off and disappears. By permitting to a certain extent the prevalence of infidelity, Providence is preparing new triumphs for religion. In asserting its authority, the preachers of the gospel have hitherto found it necessary to weigh the prospects of immortality against the interests of time: to strip the world of its charms, to insist on the deceitfulness of pleasure, the unsatisfying nature of riches, the emptiness of grandeur, and the nothingness of a mere worldly life. Topics of this nature will always have their use; but it is not by such representations alone that the importance of religion is evinced. The prevalence of impiety has armed us with new weapons in its defence.

Religion being primarily intended to make men *wise unto salvation*, the support it ministers to social order, the stability it confers on government and laws, is a *subordinate species* of advantage which we should have continued to enjoy, without reflecting on its cause, but for the development of deistical principles, and the experiment which has been made of their effects in a neighbouring country. It had been the constant boast of infidels, that their system, more liberal and generous than Christianity, needed but to be tried to produce an immense accession to human happiness; and Christian nations, careless and supine, retaining little of religion but the profession, and disgusted with its restraints, lent a favourable ear to these pretensions. God permitted the trial to be made. In one country, and that the centre of Christendom, revelation underwent a total eclipse,† while atheism, performing on a darkened theatre its strange and fearful tragedy, confounded the first elements of society, blended every age, rank, and sex in indiscriminate proscription and massacre, and convulsed all Europe to its centre; that the imperishable memorial of these events might teach the last generations of mankind to consider religion as the pillar of society, the safeguard of nations, the parent of social order, which alone has power to curb the fury of the passions, and secure to every one his rights; to the laborious the reward of their industry, to the rich

* See an excellent work by the Rev. Andrew Fuller, entitled "The Gospel its own Witness."

† It is worthy of attention that Mercier, a warm advocate of the French Revolution, and a professed Deist, in his recent work entitled "New Paris," acknowledges and laments the extinction of religion in France. "*We have*," says he, "*in proscribing superstition, destroyed all religious sentiment; but this is not the way to regenerate the world.*"—See Appendix to the 30th vol. Monthly Review.

the enjoyment of their wealth, to nobles the preservation of their honours, and to princes the stability of their thrones.

We might ask the patrons of infidelity what fury impels them to attempt the subversion of Christianity? Is it that they have discovered a better system? To what virtues are their principles favourable? Or is there one which Christians have not carried to a higher perfection than any of which their party can boast? Have they discovered a more excellent rule of life, or a better hope in death, than that which the Scriptures suggest? Above all, what are the pretensions on which they rest their claims to be the guides of mankind; or which imbolden them to expect we should trample upon the experience of ages, and abandon a religion which has been attested by a train of miracles and prophecies, in which millions of our forefathers have found a refuge in every trouble, and consolation in the hour of death; a religion which has been adorned with the highest sanctity of character and splendour of talents, which enrols among its disciples the names of Bacon, Newton, and Locke, the glory of their species, and to which these illustrious men were proud to dedicate the last and best fruits of their immortal genius?

If the question at issue is to be decided by argument, nothing can be added to the triumph of Christianity; if by an appeal to authority, what have our adversaries to oppose to these great names? Where are the infidels of such pure, uncontaminated morals, unshaken probity, and extended benevolence, that we should be in danger of being seduced into impiety by their example? Into what obscure recesses of misery, into what dungeons have their philanthropists penetrated, to lighten the fetters and relieve the sorrows of the helpless captive? What barbarous tribes have their apostles visited; what distant climes have *they* explored, encompassed with cold, nakedness, and want, to diffuse principles of virtue, and the blessings of civilization? Or will they rather choose to waive their pretensions to this extraordinary and, in their eyes, eccentric species of benevolence (for infidels, we know, are sworn enemies to enthusiasm of every sort), and rest their character on their political exploits,—on their efforts to reanimate the virtue of a sinking state, to restrain licentiousness, to calm the tumult of popular fury, and by inculcating the spirit of justice, moderation, and pity for fallen greatness, to mitigate the inevitable horrors of revolution? our adversaries will at least have the discretion, if not the modesty, to recede from the test.

More than all, their infatuated eagerness, their parricidal zeal to extinguish a sense of Deity must excite astonishment and horror. Is the idea of an almighty and perfect Ruler unfriendly to any passion which is consistent with innocence, or an obstruction to any design which it is not shameful to avow? Eternal God, on what are thine enemies intent! What are those enterprises of guilt and horror, that, for the safety of their performers, require to be enveloped in a darkness which the eye of Heaven must not pierce! Miserable men! Proud of being the offspring of chance; in love with universal disorder; whose happiness is involved in the belief of there being no witness to

their designs, and who are at ease only because they suppose themselves inhabitants of a forsaken and fatherless world!

Having been led by the nature of the subject to consider chiefly the manner in which skeptical impiety affects the welfare of states, it is the more requisite to warn you against that most fatal mistake of regarding religion as an engine of policy; and to recall to your recollection that the concern we have in it is much more as *individuals* than as *collective bodies*, and far less temporal than eternal. The happiness which it confers in the present life comprehends the blessings which it scatters by the way in its march to immortality. That future condition of being which it ascertains, and for which its promises and truths are meant to prepare us, is the ultimate end of human societies, the final scope and object of present existence; in comparison of which all the revolutions of nations and all the vicissitudes of time are light and transitory. *Godliness has*, it is true, *the promise of the life that now is;* but chiefly *of that which is to come.* Other acquisitions may be requisite to make men great; but, be assured, the religion of Jesus is alone sufficient to make them good and happy. Powerful sources of consolation in sorrow, unshaken fortitude amid the changes and perturbations of the world, humility remote from meanness, and dignity unstained by pride, contentment in every station, passions pure and calm, with habitual serenity, the full enjoyment of life, undisturbed by the dread of dissolution or the fear of an hereafter, are its invaluable gifts. To these enjoyments, however, you will necessarily continue strangers, unless you resign yourselves wholly to its power; for the consolations of religion are reserved to reward, to sweeten, and to stimulate obedience. Many, without renouncing the profession of Christianity, without formally rejecting its distinguishing doctrines, live in such an habitual violation of its laws and contradiction to its spirit, that, conscious they have more to fear than to hope from its truth, they are never able to contemplate it without terror. It haunts their imagination, instead of tranquillizing their hearts, and hangs with depressing weight on all their enjoyments and pursuits. Their religion, instead of comforting them under their troubles, is itself their greatest trouble, from which they seek refuge in the dissipation and vanity of the world, until the throbs and tumults of conscience force them back upon religion. Thus suspended between opposite powers, the sport of contradictory influences, they are disqualified for the happiness of both worlds; and neither enjoy the pleasures of sin nor the peace of piety. Is it surprising to find a mind thus bewildered in uncertainty and dissatisfied with itself, courting deception, and embracing with eagerness every pretext to mutilate the claims and enervate the authority of Christianity; forgetting that it is of the very essence of the religious principle to preside and control, and that it is impossible to *serve God and mammon?* It is this class of professors who are chiefly in danger of being entangled in the snares of infidelity.

The champions of infidelity have much more reason to be ashamed than to boast of such converts. For what can be a stronger presumption of the falsehood of a system, than that it is the opiate of a restless

conscience; that it prevails with minds of a certain description, not because they find it true, but because they feel it necessary; and that in adopting it they consult less with their reason than with their vices and their fears? It requires but little sagacity to foresee that speculations which originate in guilt must end in ruin. Infidels are not themselves satisfied with the truth of their system; for had they any settled assurance of its principles, in consequence of calm dispassionate investigation, they would never disturb the quiet of the world by their attempts to proselyte; but would lament their own infelicity, in not being able to perceive sufficient evidence for the truth of religion, which furnishes such incentives to virtue, and inspires such exalted hopes. Having nothing to substitute in the place of religion, it is absurd to suppose that, in opposition to the collective voice of every country, age, and time proclaiming its necessity, solicitude for the welfare of mankind impels them to destroy it.

To very different motives must their conduct be imputed. More like conspirators than philosophers, in spite of the darkness with which they endeavour to surround themselves, some rays of unwelcome conviction will penetrate, some secret apprehensions that all is not right will make themselves felt, which they find nothing so effectual to quell as an attempt to enlist fresh disciples, who, in exchange for new principles, impart confidence and diminish fear. For the same reason it is seldom they attack Christianity by argument: their favourite weapons are ridicule, obscenity, and blasphemy; as the most miserable outcasts of society are, of all men, found most to delight in vulgar merriment and senseless riot.

Jesus Christ seems to have *his fan in his hand, to be thoroughly purging his floor;* and nominal Christians will probably be scattered like chaff. But has *real* Christianity any thing to fear? Have not the degenerate manners and corrupt lives of multitudes in the visible church been, on the contrary, the principal occasion of scandal and offence? Infidelity, without intending it, is gradually removing this reproach: possessing the property of attracting to itself the morbid humours which pervade the church, until the Christian profession, on the one hand, is reduced to a sound and healthy state, and skepticism, on the other, exhibits nothing but a mass of putridity and disease.

In a view of the final issue of the contest, we should find little cause to lament the astonishing prevalence of infidelity, but for a solicitude for the rising generation, to whom its principles are recommended by two motives, with young minds the most persuasive,—the love of independence, and the love of pleasure. With respect to the first, we would earnestly entreat the young to remember that, by the unanimous consent of all ages, modesty, docility, and reverence to superior years, and to parents above all, have been considered as their *appropriate virtues*, a guard assigned by the immutable laws of God and nature on the inexperience of youth; and with respect to the second, that Christianity prohibits no pleasures that are innocent, lays no restraints that are capricious; but that the sobriety and purity which it enjoins, by strengthening the intellectual powers, and preserving

the faculties of mind and body in undiminished vigour, lay *the surest* foundation of present peace and future eminence. At such a season as this, it becomes an urgent duty on parents, guardians, and tutors to watch, not only over the morals, but the principles of those committed to their care; to make it appear that a concern for their eternal welfare is their chief concern; and to imbue them early with that knowledge of the evidences of Christianity, and that profound reverence for the Scriptures, that, with the blessing of God (which, with submission, they may then expect), *may keep them from this hour of temptation that has come upon all the world, to try them that dwell on the earth.*

To an attentive observer of the signs of the times, it will appear one of the most extraordinary phenomena of this eventful crisis, that, amid the ravages of atheism and infidelity, real religion is evidently on the increase. *The kingdom of God*, we know, *cometh not with observation;* but still there are not wanting manifest tokens of its approach. The personal appearance of the Son of God was announced by the shaking of nations; his spiritual kingdom, in all probability, will be established in the midst of similar convulsions and disorders. The blasphemous impiety of the enemies of God, as well as the zealous efforts of his sincere worshippers, will doubtless be overruled to accomplish the purposes of his unerring providence: while, in inflicting the chastisements of offended Deity on corrupt communities and nations, infidelity marks its progress by devastation and ruin, by the prostration of thrones and concussion of kingdoms; thus appalling the inhabitants of the world, and compelling them to take refuge in the church of God, the true sanctuary; the stream of divine knowledge, unobserved, is flowing in new channels, winding its course among humble valleys, refreshing thirsty deserts, and enriching with far other and higher blessings than those of commerce the most distant climes and nations, until, agreeably to the prediction of prophecy, the *knowledge of the Lord shall fill and cover the whole earth.*

Within the limits of this discourse it would be impracticable to exhibit the evidences of Christianity; nor is it my design: but there is one consideration, resulting immediately from my text, which is entitled to great weight with all who believe in the one living and true God as the sole object of worship. The Ephesians, in common with other Gentiles, are described in the text as being, previous to their conversion, *without God in the world;* that is, without any just and solid acquaintance with his character, destitute of the knowledge of his will, the institutes of his worship, and the hopes of his favour; to the truth of which representation, whoever possesses the slightest acquaintance with pagan antiquity must assent. Nor is it a fact less incontestable, that, while human philosophy was never able to abolish idolatry in a single village, the promulgation of the gospel overthrew it in a great part (and that the most enlightened) of the world. If our belief in the unity and perfections of God, together with his moral government and exclusive right to the worship of mankind, be founded in truth, they cannot reasonably be denied to be truths of the first

importance, and infinitely to outweigh the greatest discoveries in science; because they turn the hopes, fears, and interests of man into a totally different channel from that in which they must otherwise flow. Wherever these principles are first admitted, there a new dominion is erected, and a new system of laws established.

But since all events are under divine direction, is it reasonable to suppose that the great Parent, after suffering his creatures to continue for ages ignorant of his true character, should at length, in the course of his Providence, fix upon falsehood, and that alone, as the effectual method of making himself known; and that, what the virtuous exercise of reason in the best and wisest men was never permitted to accomplish, he should confer on fraud and delusion the honour of effecting? It ill comports with the majesty of truth, or the character of God, to believe that he has built the noblest superstructure on the weakest foundation; or reduced mankind to the miserable alternative either of remaining destitute of the knowledge of himself, or of deriving it from the polluted source of impious imposture. We therefore feel ourselves justified, on this occasion, in adopting the triumphant boast of the great apostle: *Where is the wise, where is the scribe, where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

NOTE TO PAGE 38.

The fury of the most sanguinary parties was especially pointed against the Christian priesthood, &c.—The author finds he has given great offence to some friends whom he highly esteems, by applying the term *Christian priesthood* to the popish clergy. He begs leave to make a remark or two by way of apology.

1. It is admitted by all candid Protestants that salvation is attainable in the Roman Catholic church; but he should be glad to be informed what part of the Christian covenant entitles us to expect the salvation of those (where the gospel is promulgated) who are not even a branch of the visible church of Christ. The papistical tenets are either *fundamentally* erroneous, on which supposition it is certain no papist can be saved; or their errors must be consistent with Christian faith, and, consequently, cannot be a valid reason for excluding those who maintain them from being a part (a most corrupt part, if you please, but still a part) of the Christian church.

2. The popish clergy were persecuted under the *character of Christians*, not under the notion of heretics or schismatics. They who were the subjects of persecution were certainly the best judges of its aim and direction; and when the Archbishop of Paris and others endeavoured to screen themselves from its effects by a recantation, what did they recant? Was it popery? No; but the profession of Christianity. These apostates, doubtless, meant to remove the ground of offence, which, in their opinion, was the Christian profession. If the soundest ecclesiastical historians have not refused the honours of martyrdom to such as suffered in the cause of truth among the Gnostics, it ill becomes the liberality of the present age to contemplate with sullen indifference, or malicious joy, the sufferings of conscientious Catholics.

3. At the period to which the author refers, Christian worship of *every kind* was prohibited; while, in solemn mockery of religion, adoration was paid to a strumpet, under the title of the Goddess of Reason. Is it necessary to prove that men who were thus abandoned must be hostile to true religion under every form? Or, if there be any gradations in their abhorrence, to that most which is the most pure and perfect? Are atheism and obscenity more congenial to the Protestant than to the popish profession? To have incurred the hatred of the ruling party of France at the season alluded to is an honour which the author would be sorry to resign, as the exclusive boast of the church of Rome. To have been the object of the partiality of such bloody and inhuman monsters would have been a stain upon Protestants which the virtue of ages could not obliterate.

REFLECTIONS ON WAR:

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT

THE BAPTIST MEETING, CAMBRIDGE,

On Tuesday, June 1, 1802,

BEING THE DAY OF THANKSGIVING FOR A GENERAL PEACE

PREFACE.

The writer is not aware that the sentiments contained in this discourse require apology; though he is convinced he needs the candour of the public with respect to the imperfect manner in which they are exhibited. If it be deemed an impropriety to introduce political reflections in a discourse from the pulpit, he wishes it to be remembered that these are of a general nature, and such as, rising out of the subject and the occasion, he cannot suppose it improper for a Christian minister to impress. With party politics he is determined to have as little to do as possible, and in the exercise of his professional duties nothing at all. Conscious that what is here advanced was meant neither to flatter nor offend any party, he is not very solicitous about those misconstructions or misrepresentations to which the purest intentions are exposed. It will probably be objected, that he has dwelt too much on the horrors of war for a thanksgiving sermon; in answer to which he begs it may be remembered, that as the pleasure of rest is relative to fatigue, and that of ease to pain, so the blessing of peace, considered *merely as peace*, is exactly proportioned to the calamity of war. As this, whenever it is justifiable, arises out of a *necessity*, not a desire of acquisition, its natural and proper effect is merely to replace a nation in the state it was in before that necessity was incurred, or, in other words, to recover what was lost and secure what was endangered. The writer intended to add something more on the moral effects of war (a subject which he should be glad to see undertaken by some superior hand), but found it would not be compatible with the limits he determined to assign himself. The sermon having been preached for the benefit of a benevolent society, instituted at Cambridge, will sufficiently account for the observations on charity to the poor, introduced towards the close. The good which has already arisen from the exertions of that society is more than equal to its most sanguine expectations; and should this publication contribute in the smallest degree to the formation of similar ones in other parts, the author will think himself abundantly compensated for the little trouble it has cost him.

Cambridge, *June* 19, 1802.

A SERMON.

PSALM xlvi. 8, 9.

Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.

To the merciful interposition of Providence we owe it that our native land has been exempted for nearly sixty years from being the seat of war; our insular situation having preserved us under God from foreign invasion; the admirable balance of our constitution from internal discord. We have heard indeed of the ravages of armies, and the depopulation of countries, but they have merely supplied a topic of discourse, and have occasioned no serious alarm. The military system, as far as it has appeared in England, has been seen only on the side of its gayety and pomp, a pleasing show, without imparting any idea of its horrors; and the rumour of battles and slaughter conveyed from afar have rather amused our leisure than disturbed our repose. While we cannot be too thankful for our security, it has placed us under a disadvantage in one respect, which is, that we have learned to contemplate war with too much indifference, and to feel for the unhappy countries immediately involved in it too little compassion. Had we ever experienced its calamities, we should celebrate the restoration of peace on this occasion with warmer emotions than there is room to apprehend are at present felt. To awaken those sentiments of gratitude which we are this day assembled to express, it will be proper briefly to recall to your attention some of the dreadful effects of hostility. Real war, my brethren, is a very different thing from that painted image of it which you see on a parade, or at a review: it is the most awful scourge that Providence employs for the chastisement of man. It is the garment of vengeance with which the Deity arrays himself, when he comes forth to punish the inhabitants of the earth. It is *the day of the Lord, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger.* It is thus described by the sublimest of prophets: *Howl ye, for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty: therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt; pangs and sorrows shall take hold on them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth; they shall be amazed one at another; their faces*

shall be as flames. Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and he shall destroy the sinners out of it. For the stars of heaven, and the constellations thereof, shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not give her light.

War may be considered in two views,—as it affects the happiness, and as it affects the virtue of mankind; as a source of misery, and as a source of crimes.

1. *Though we must all die*, as the woman of Tekoa said, *and are as water spilt upon the ground which cannot be gathered up;* yet it is impossible for a humane mind to contemplate the rapid extinction of innumerable lives without concern. To perish in a moment, to be hurried instantaneously, without preparation and without warning, into the presence of the Supreme Judge, has something in it inexpressibly awful and affecting. Since the commencement of those hostilities which are now so happily closed, it may be reasonably conjectured that not less than half a million of our fellow-creatures have fallen a sacrifice. Half a million of beings, sharers of the same nature, warmed with the same hopes, and as fondly attached to life as ourselves, have been prematurely swept into the grave; each of whose deaths has pierced the heart of a wife, a parent, a brother, or a sister. How many of these scenes of complicated distress have occurred since the commencement of hostilities is known only to Omniscience: that they are innumerable cannot admit of a doubt. In some parts of Europe, perhaps, there is scarcely a family exempt.

Though the whole race of man is doomed to dissolution, and we are all hastening to our long home; yet at each successive moment, life and death seem to divide between them the dominion of mankind, and life to have the larger share. It is otherwise in war: death reigns there without a rival, and without control. War is the work, the element, or rather the sport and triumph of death, who glories, not only in the extent of his conquest, but in the richness of his spoil. In the other methods of attack, in the other forms which death assumes, the feeble and the aged, who at the best can live but a short time, are usually the victims; here it is the vigorous and the strong. It is remarked by an ancient historian, that in peace children bury their parents, in war parents bury their children:* nor is the difference small. Children lament their parents, sincerely indeed, but with that moderate and tranquil sorrow which it is natural for those to feel who are conscious of retaining many tender ties, many animating prospects. Parents mourn for their children with the bitterness of despair; the aged parent, the widowed mother, loses, when she is deprived of her children, every thing but the capacity of suffering; her heart, withered and desolate, admits no other object, cherishes no other hope. *It is Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they are not.*

* In the former editions this sentiment was imputed to Homer: the truth, however, is, as Mr. Hall was afterward aware, that it was due to Herodotus, and occurs in his *Clio*. Ἐν μὲν γὰρ τῇ (εἰρήνῃ) οἱ παῖδες τοὺς πατέρας θάπτουσι· ἐν δὲ τῷ (πολέμῳ) οἱ πατέρες τοὺς παῖδας Cap. 87.—Ed

But, to confine our attention to the number of the slain would give us a very inadequate idea of the ravages of the sword. The lot of those who perish instantaneously may be considered, apart from religious prospects, as comparatively happy, since they are exempt from those lingering diseases and slow torments to which others are liable. We cannot see an individual expire, though a stranger or an enemy, without being sensibly moved, and prompted by compassion to lend him every assistance in our power. Every trace of resentment vanishes in a moment: every other emotion gives way to pity and terror. In these last extremities we remember nothing but the respect and tenderness due to our common nature. What a scene then must a field of battle present, where thousands are left without assistance and without pity, with their wounds exposed to the piercing air, while the blood, freezing as it flows, binds them to the earth, amid the trampling of horses and the insults of an enraged foe! If they are spared by the humanity of the enemy and carried from the field, it is but a prolongation of torment. Conveyed in uneasy vehicles, often to a remote distance, through roads almost impassable, they are lodged in ill-prepared receptacles for the wounded and the sick, where the variety of distress baffles all the efforts of humanity and skill, and renders it impossible to give to each the attention he demands. Far from their native home, no tender assiduities of friendship, no well-known voice, no wife, or mother, or sister is near to sooth their sorrows, relieve their thirst, or close their eyes in death. Unhappy man! and must you be swept into the grave unnoticed and unnumbered, and no friendly tear be shed for your sufferings or mingled with your dust!

We must remember, however, that as a very small proportion of a military life is spent in actual combat, so it is a very small part of its miseries which must be ascribed to this source. More are consumed by the rust of inactivity than by the edge of the sword; confined to a scanty or unwholesome diet, exposed in sickly climates, harassed with tiresome marches and perpetual alarms, their life is a continual scene of hardships and dangers. They grow familiar with hunger, cold, and watchfulness. Crowded into hospitals and prisons, contagion spreads among their ranks, till the ravages of disease exceed those of the enemy.

We have hitherto only adverted to the sufferings of those who are engaged in the profession of arms, without taking into our account the situation of the countries which are the scene of hostilities. How dreadful to hold every thing at the mercy of an enemy, and to receive life itself as a boon dependent on the sword. How boundless the fears which such a situation must inspire, where the issues of life and death are determined by no known laws, principles, or customs, and no conjecture can be formed of our destiny, except as far as it is dimly deciphered in characters of blood, in the dictates of revenge, and the caprices of power. Conceive but for a moment the consternation which the approach of an invading army would impress on the peaceful villages in this neighbourhood. When you have placed yourselves for an instant in that situation, you will learn to sympathize with those

unhappy countries which have sustained the ravages of arms But how is it possible to give you an idea of these horrors? Here you behold rich harvests, the bounty of heaven and the reward of industry, consumed in a moment or trampled under foot, while famine and pestilence follow the steps of desolation. There the cottages of peasants given up to the flames, mothers expiring through fear, not for themselves but their infants; the inhabitants flying with their helpless babes in all directions, miserable fugitives on their native soil! In another part you witness opulent cities taken by storm; the streets, where no sounds were heard but those of peaceful industry, filled on a sudden with slaughter and blood, resounding with the cries of the pursuing and the pursued; the palaces of nobles demolished, the houses of the rich pillaged, the chastity of virgins and of matrons violated, and every age, sex, and rank mingled in promiscuous massacre and ruin.

If we consider the maxims of war which prevailed in the ancient world, and which still prevail in many barbarous nations, we perceive that those who survived the fury of battle and the insolence of victory were only reserved for more durable calamities; swept into hopeless captivity, exposed in markets, or plunged in mines, with the melancholy distinction bestowed on princes and warriors, after appearing in the triumphal procession of the conqueror, of being conducted to instant death. The contemplation of such scenes as these forces on us this awful reflection, that neither the fury of wild beasts, the concussions of the earth, nor the violence of tempests are to be compared to the ravages of arms; and that nature in her utmost extent, or, more properly, divine justice in its utmost severity, has supplied no enemy to man so terrible as man.

Still, however, it would be happy for mankind if the effects of national hostility terminated here; but the fact is, that they who are farthest removed from its immediate desolations share largely in the calamity. They are drained of the most precious part of their population, their youth, to repair the waste made by the sword. They are drained of their wealth by the prodigious expense incurred in the equipment of fleets and the subsistence of armies in remote parts. The accumulation of debt and taxes diminishes the public strength, and depresses private industry. An augmentation in the price of the necessaries of life, inconvenient to all classes, falls with peculiar weight on the labouring poor, who must carry their industry to market every day, and therefore cannot wait for that advance of price which gradually attaches to every other article. Of all people the poor are on this account the greatest sufferers by war, and have the most reason to rejoice in the restoration of peace. As it is the furthest from my purpose to awaken unpleasing reflections, or to taint the pure satisfaction of this day by the smallest infusion of political acrimony, it will not be expected I should apply these remarks to the peculiar circumstances of this country, though it would be unpardonable in us to forget (for to forget our dangers is to forget our mercies) how nearly we have been reduced to famine, principally, it is true, through a

failure in the crops, but greatly aggravated, no doubt, in its pressure, by our being engaged in a war of unexampled expenditure and extent.

In commercial states (of which Europe principally consists), whatever interrupts their intercourse is a fatal blow to national prosperity. Such states having a mutual dependence on each other, the effects of their hostility extend far beyond the parties engaged in the contest. If there be a country highly commercial which has a decided superiority in wealth and industry, together with a fleet which enables it to protect its trade, the commerce of such a country may survive the shock, but it is at the expense of the commerce of all other nations; a painful reflection to a generous mind. Even there the usual channels of trade being closed, it is some time before it can force a new passage for itself; previous to which an almost total stagnation takes place, by which multitudes are impoverished, and thousands of the industrious poor, being thrown out of employment, are plunged into wretchedness and beggary. Who can calculate the number of industrious families in different parts of the world, to say nothing of our own country, who have been reduced to poverty from this cause since the peace of Europe was interrupted?

The plague of a widely extended war possesses, in fact, a sort of omnipresence, by which it makes itself every where felt; for while it gives up myriads to slaughter in one part of the globe, it is busily employed in scattering over countries exempt from its immediate desolations the seeds of famine, pestilence, and death.

If statesmen, if Christian statesmen at least, had a proper feeling on this subject, and would open their hearts to the reflections which such scenes must inspire, instead of rushing eagerly to arms from the thirst of conquest or the thirst of gain, would they not hesitate long, would they not try every expedient, every lenient art consistent with national honour, before they ventured on this desperate remedy, or rather, before they plunged into this gulf of horror?

It is time to proceed to another view of the subject, which is, the influence of national warfare on the morals of mankind: a topic on which I must be very brief, but which it would be wrong to omit, as it supplies an additional reason to every good man for the love of peace.

The contests of nations are both the offspring and the parent of injustice. The word of God ascribes the existence of war to the disorderly passions of men. *Whence come wars and fighting among you?* saith the apostle James; *come they not from your lusts that war in your members?* It is certain two nations cannot engage in hostilities but one party must be guilty of injustice; and if the magnitude of crimes is to be estimated by a regard to their consequences, it is difficult to conceive an action of equal guilt with the wanton violation of peace. Though something must generally be allowed for the complexness and intricacy of national claims, and the consequent liability to deception, yet where the guilt of an unjust war is clear and manifest, it sinks every other crime into insignificance. If the existence of war always *implies* injustice in one at least of the parties concerned,

it is also the fruitful parent of crimes. It reverses, with respect to its objects, all the rules of morality. It is nothing less than a temporary repeal of the principles of virtue. It is a system out of which almost all the virtues are excluded, and in which nearly all the vices are incorporated. Whatever renders human nature amiable or respectable, whatever engages love or confidence, is sacrificed at its shrine. In instructing us to consider a portion of our fellow-creatures as the proper objects of enmity, it removes, as far as they are concerned, the basis of all society, of all civilization and virtue; for the basis of these is the good-will due to every individual of the species, as being a part of ourselves. From this principle all the rules of social virtue emanate. Justice and humanity, in their utmost extent, are nothing more than the practical application of this great law. The sword, and that alone, cuts asunder the bond of consanguinity which unites man to man. As it immediately aims at the extinction of life, it is next to impossible, upon the principle that every thing may be lawfully done to him whom we have a right to kill, to set limits to military license; for when men pass from the dominion of reason to that of force, whatever restraints are attempted to be laid on the passions will be feeble and fluctuating. Though we must applaud, therefore, the attempts of the humane Grotius to blend maxims of humanity with military operations, it is to be feared they will never coalesce, since the former imply the subsistence of those ties which the latter suppose to be dissolved. Hence the morality of peaceful times is directly opposite to the maxims of war. The fundamental rule of the first is to do good; of the latter to inflict injuries. The former commands us to succour the oppressed; the latter to overwhelm the defenceless. The former teaches men to love their enemies; the latter to make themselves terrible even to strangers. The rules of morality will not suffer us to promote the dearest interest by falsehood; the maxims of war applaud it when employed in the destruction of others. That a familiarity with such maxims must tend to harden the heart, as well as to pervert the moral sentiments, is too obvious to need illustration. The natural consequence of their prevalence is an unfeeling and unprincipled ambition, with an idolatry of talents, and a contempt of virtue; whence the esteem of mankind is turned from the humble, the beneficent, and the good, to men who are qualified by a genius fertile in expedients, a courage that is never appalled, and a heart that never pities, to become the destroyers of the earth. While the philanthropist is devising means to mitigate the evils and augment the happiness of the world, a fellow-worker together with God, in exploring and giving effect to the benevolent tendencies of nature, the warrior is revolving, in the gloomy recesses of his capacious mind, plans of future devastation and ruin. Prisons crowded with captives, cities emptied of their inhabitants, fields desolate and waste, are among his proudest trophies. The fabric of his fame is cemented with tears and blood; and if his name is wafted to the ends of the earth, it is in the shrill cry of suffering humanity; in the curses and imprecations of those whom his sword has reduced to despair.

Let me not be understood to involve in this guilt every man who engages in war, or to assert that war itself is in all cases unlawful. The injustice of mankind, hitherto incurable, renders it in some instances necessary, and therefore lawful; but, unquestionably, these instances are much more rare than the practice of the world and its loose casuistry would lead us to suppose.

Detesting war, considered as a trade or profession, and conceiving conquerors to be the enemies of their species, it appears* to me that nothing is more suitable to the office of a Christian minister than an attempt, however feeble, to take off the colours from false greatness, and to show the deformity which its delusive splendour too often conceals. This is perhaps one of the best services religion can do to society. Nor is there any more necessary. For dominion affording a plain and palpable distinction, and every man feeling the effects of power, however incompetent he may be to judge of wisdom and goodness, the character of a hero, there is reason to fear, will always be too dazzling. The sense of his injustice will be too often lost in the admiration of his success.

In contemplating the influence of war on public morals, it would be unpardonable not to remark the effects it never fails to produce in those parts of the world which are its immediate seat. The injury which the morals of a people sustain from an invading army is prodigious. The agitation and suspense universally prevalent are incompatible with every thing which requires calm thought or serious reflection. In such a situation is it any wonder the duties of piety fall into neglect, the sanctuary of God is forsaken, and the gates of Zion mourn and are desolate? Familiarized to the sight of rapine and slaughter, the people must acquire a hard and unfeeling character. The precarious tenure by which every thing is held during the absence of laws must impair confidence; the sudden revolutions of fortune must be infinitely favourable to fraud and injustice. He who reflects on these consequences will not think it too much to affirm, that the injury the virtue of a people sustains from invasion is greater than that which affects their property or their lives. He will perceive that by such a calamity the seeds of order, virtue, and piety, which it is the first care of education to implant and mature, are swept away as by a hurricane.

Though the sketch which I have attempted to give of the miseries which ensue when nation lifts up arms against nation is faint and imperfect, it is yet sufficient to imprint on our minds a salutary horror of such scenes, and a gratitude, warm, I trust, and sincere, to that gracious Providence which has brought them to a close.

To acknowledge the hand of God is a duty indeed at all times; but there are seasons when it is made so bare, that it is next to impossible, and therefore signally criminal, to overlook it. It is almost unnecessary to add that the present is one of those seasons. If ever

* "Non est inter artificia bellum, imo res est tam horrenda, ut eam nisi summa necessitas, aut vera caritas, honestam efficere queat. Augustino judice, militare non est delictum, sed propter prædam militare peccatum est."—*Grot. de Jure Bell.* lib. ii. c. 25.

we are expected to *be still and know that he is God*, it is on the present occasion, after a crisis so unexampled in the annals of the world; during which, scenes have been disclosed and events have arisen so much more astonishing than any that history had recorded or romance had feigned, that we are compelled to lose sight of human agency, and to behold the Deity acting, as it were, apart and alone.

The contest in which we have been lately engaged is distinguished from all others in modern times by the number of nations it embraced, and the animosity with which it was conducted. Making its first appearance in the centre of the civilized world, like a fire kindled in the thickest part of a forest, it spread during ten years on every side; it burnt in all directions, gathering fresh fury in its progress, till it inwrapped the whole of Europe in its flames; an awful spectacle, not only to the inhabitants of the earth, but in the eyes of superior beings! What place can we point out to which its effects have not extended? Where is the nation, the family, the individual I might almost say, who has not felt its influence? It is not, my brethren, the termination of an ordinary contest which we are assembled this day to commemorate; it is an event which includes for the present (may it long perpetuate) the tranquillity of Europe and the pacification of the world. We are met to express our devout gratitude to God for putting a period to a war the most eventful perhaps that has been witnessed for a thousand years, a war which has transformed the face of Europe, removed the landmarks of nations and limits of empire.

The spirit of animosity with which it has been conducted is another circumstance which has eminently distinguished the recent contest. As it would be highly improper to enter on this occasion (were my abilities equal to the task) into a discussion of those principles which have divided, and probably will long divide, the sentiments of men, it may be sufficient to observe in general, that what principally contributed to make the contest so peculiarly violent was a discordancy between the opinions and the institutions of society. A daring spirit of speculation, untempered, alas! by humility and devotion, has been the distinguishing feature of the present times. While it confined itself to the exposure of the corruptions of religion and the abuses of power, it met with some degree of countenance from the wise and good in all countries, who were ready to hope it was the instrument destined by Providence to meliorate the condition of mankind. How great was their disappointment when they perceived that pretensions to philanthropy were, with many, only a mask assumed for the more successful propagation of impiety and anarchy!

From the prevalence of this spirit, however, a schism was gradually formed between the adherents of those who, styling themselves philosophers, were intent on some great change which they were little careful to explain, and the patrons of the ancient order of things. The pretensions of each were plausible. The accumulation of abuses and the corruptions of religion furnished weapons to the philosophers; the dangerous tendency of the speculations of these latter, together with their impiety, which became every day more manifest, gave an advan-

tage not less considerable to their opponents, which they did not fail to improve. In this situation the breach grew wider and wider; nothing temperate or conciliating was admitted. Every attempt at purifying religion without impairing its authority, and at improving the condition of society without shaking its foundation, was crushed and annihilated in the encounter of two hostile forces. By this means the way was prepared, first for internal dissension, and then for wars the most bloody and extensive.

The war in which so great a part of the world was lately engaged has been frequently styled a war of principle. This was indeed its exact character; and it was this which rendered it so violent and obstinate. Disputes which are founded merely on passion or on interest are comparatively of short duration. They are, at least, not calculated to spread. However they may inflame the principles, they are but little adapted to gain partisans.

To render them durable there must be an infusion of speculative opinions. For, corrupt as men are, they are yet so much the creatures of reflection, and so strongly addicted to sentiments of right and wrong, that their attachment to a public cause can rarely be secured, or their animosity be kept alive, unless their understandings are engaged by some appearances of truth and rectitude. Hence speculative differences in religion and politics become rallying points to the passions. Whoever reflects on the civil wars between the Guelphs and the Ghibbelines, or the adherents of the pope and the emperor, which distracted Italy and Germany in the middle ages, or those between the houses of York and Lancaster, in the fifteenth century, will find abundant confirmation of this remark. This is well understood by the leaders of parties in all nations; who, though they frequently aim at nothing more than the attainment of power, yet always contrive to cement the attachment of their followers, by mixing some speculative opinion with their contests, well knowing that what depends for support merely on the irascible passions soon subsides. Then does party animosity reach its height, when, to an interference of interests sufficient to kindle resentment, is superadded a persuasion of rectitude, a conviction of truth, an apprehension in each party that they are contending for principles of the last importance, on the success of which the happiness of millions depends. Under these impressions men are apt to indulge the most selfish and vindictive passions without suspicion or control. The understanding indeed, in that state, instead of controlling the passions, often serves only to give steadiness to their impulse, to ratify and consecrate, so to speak, all their movements.

When we apply these remarks to the late contest, we can be at no loss to discover the source of the unparalleled animosity which inflamed it. Never before were so many opposing interests, passions, and principles committed to such a decision. On one side an attachment to the ancient order of things, on the other a passionate desire of change; a wish in some to perpetuate, in others to destroy every thing; every abuse sacred in the eyes of the former, every foundation attempted to be demolished by the latter; a jealousy of power shrinking from the

slightest innovation, pretensions to freedom pushed to madness and anarchy; superstition in all its dotage, impiety in all its fury; whatever, in short, could be found most discordant in the principles or violent in the passions of men were the fearful ingredients which the hand of divine justice selected to mingle in this furnace of wrath. Can we any longer wonder at the desolations it made in the earth? Great as they are, they are no more than might be expected from the peculiar nature of the warfare. When we take this into our consideration, we are no longer surprised to find the variety of its battles burdens the memory, that the imagination is perfectly fatigued in travelling over its scenes of slaughter, and that falling, like the mystic star in the Apocalypse, *upon the streams and the rivers, it turned the third part of their waters into blood.**

Whether the foundations of lasting tranquillity are laid, or a respite only afforded to the nations of the earth, in the present auspicious event, is a question the discussion of which would only damp the satisfaction of this day. Whatever may be the future determinations of Providence, let no gloomy foreboding depress our gratitude for its gracious interposition in our favour. While we feel sentiments of respectful acknowledgment to the human instruments employed, let us remember they are but instruments, and that it is our duty to look through them to Him who is the author of every good and perfect gift.

Let us now turn to the pleasing part of our subject, which invites us to contemplate the reasons for gratitude and joy suggested by the restoration of peace.

Permit me to express my hope, that along with peace the spirit of peace will return. How can we better imitate our heavenly Father, than, when he is pleased to compose the animosities of nations, to open our hearts to every milder influence? Let us hope more mutual forbearance, a more candid construction of each other's views and sentiments will prevail. No end can now be answered by the revival of party disputes. The speculations which gave occasion to them have been yielded to the arbitration of the sword, and neither the fortune of war nor the present condition of Europe is such as affords to any party room for high exultation. Our public and private affections are no longer at variance. That benevolence which embraces the world is now in perfect harmony with the tenderness that endears our country. Burying in oblivion, therefore, all national antipathies, together with those cruel jealousies and suspicions which have too much marred the pleasures of mutual intercourse, let our hearts correspond to the blessing we celebrate, and keep pace as far as possible with the movements of divine beneficence.

A most important benefit has already followed the return of peace, a reduction of the price of bread; and though other necessaries of life have not fallen in proportion, this is a circumstance which can hardly

* The author has inserted some reflections here which were not included in the discourse as delivered from the pulpit. He wished to explain himself somewhat more fully on certain points, on which his sentiments in a former publication have been much misunderstood or misrepresented But this is a circumstance with which, as it has not troubled himself, he wishes not any further to trouble the reader

fail to follow. We trust the circumstances of the poor and the labouring classes will be much improved, and that there will shortly be no complaining in our streets. Every cottager, we hope, will feel that there is peace; commerce return to its ancient channels, the public burdens be lightened, the national debt diminished, and harmony and plenty again gladden the land.

In enumerating the motives to national gratitude which the retrospect of the past supplies, it would be unpardonable not to reckon among the most cogent, the preservation of our excellent constitution; nor can I doubt of the concurrence of all who hear me when I add, it is a pleasing reflection, that at a period when the spirit of giddiness and revolt has been so prevalent, we have preferred the blessings of order to a phantom of liberty, and have not been so mad as to wade through the horrors of a revolution to make way for a military despot. If the constitution has sustained serious injury, either during the war or at any preceding period, as there is great room to apprehend, we shall have leisure (may we but have virtue!) to apply temperate and effectual reforms. In the mean time, let us love it sincerely, cherish it tenderly, and secure it as far as possible on all sides, watching with impartial solicitude against every thing that may impair its spirit or endanger its form.

But, above all, let us cherish the spirit of religion. When we wish to open our hearts on this subject, and to represent to you the vanity, the nothingness of every thing else in comparison, we feel ourselves checked by an apprehension you will consider it merely as professional language, and consequently entitled to little regard. If, however, you will only turn your eyes to the awful scenes before you, our voice may be spared. They will speak loud enough of themselves. On this subject they will furnish the most awful and momentous instruction. From them you will learn, that the safety of nations is not to be sought in arts or in arms; that science may flourish amid the decay of humanity; that the utmost barbarity may be blended with the utmost refinement; that a passion for speculation, unrestrained by the fear of God, and a deep sense of human imperfection, merely hardens the heart; and that as religion, in short, is the great tamer of the breast, the source of tranquillity and order, so the crimes of voluptuousness and impiety inevitably conduct a people, before they are aware, to the brink of desolation and anarchy.

If you had wished to figure to yourselves a country which had reached the utmost pinnacle of prosperity, you would undoubtedly have turned your eyes to France, as she appeared a few years before the revolution; illustrious in learning and genius; the favourite abode of the arts, and the mirror of fashion, whither the flower of the nobility from all countries resorted, to acquire the last polish of which the human character is susceptible. Lulled in voluptuous repose, and dreaming of a philosophical millennium, without dependence upon God, like the generation before the flood, *they ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage.* In that exuberant soil every thing seemed to flourish but religion and virtue. The season however was

at length arrived when God was resolved to punish their impiety, as well as to avenge the blood of his servants, whose souls had for a century been incessantly crying to him from under the altar. And what method did he employ for this purpose? When He to whom vengeance belongs, when He whose ways are unsearchable, and whose wisdom is inexhaustible, proceeded to the execution of this strange work, he drew from his treasures a weapon he had never employed before. Resolving to make their punishment as signal as their crimes, he neither let loose an inundation of barbarous nations, nor the desolating powers of the universe: he neither overwhelmed them with earthquakes, nor visited them with pestilence. He summoned from among themselves a ferocity more terrible than either; a ferocity which, mingling in the struggle for liberty, and borrowing aid from that very refinement to which it seemed to be opposed, turned every man's hand against his neighbour, sparing no age, nor sex, nor rank, till, satiated with the ruin of greatness, the distresses of innocence and the tears of beauty, it terminated its career in the most unrelenting despotism. *Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and which was, and which shall be, because thou hast judged thus, for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy.*

If the weakness of humanity will not permit us to keep pace with the movements of divine justice; if, from the deep commiseration excited by the view of so much wo, our tongue falters in expressing those sublime sentiments of triumph which revelation suggests on this occasion, we shall be pardoned by the Being who knows our frame; while nothing can prevent us, at least, from adoring this illustrious vindication of his own religion, whose divinity we see is not less apparent in the blessings it bestows, than in the calamities which mark its departure.

Our only security against similar calamities is a steady adherence to this religion; not the religion of mere form and profession, but that which has its seat in the heart; not as it is mutilated and debased by the refinements of a false philosophy, but as it exists in all its simplicity and extent in the sacred Scriptures; consisting in sorrow for sin, in the love of God, and in faith in a crucified Redeemer. If this religion revives and flourishes among us, we may still surmount all our difficulties, and no weapon formed against us will prosper: if we despise or neglect it, no human power can afford us protection. Instead of showing our love to our country, therefore, by engaging eagerly in the strife of parties, let us choose to signalize it rather by beneficence, by piety, by an exemplary discharge of the duties of private life, under a persuasion that that man, in the final issue of things, will be seen to have been the best patriot who is the best Christian. He who diffuses the most happiness and mitigates the most distress within his own circle is undoubtedly the best friend to his country and the world, since nothing more is necessary than for all men to imitate his conduct, to make the greatest part of the misery of the world cease in a moment. While the passion, then, of some is to shine, of some to

govern, and of others to accumulate, let one great passion alone inflame our breasts, the passion which reason ratifies, which conscience approves, which Heaven inspires,—that of being and of doing good.

There is no vanity, I trust, in supposing that the reflections which this discourse has presented to your view have awakened those sentiments of gratitude to the Father of mercies for his gracious interposition in the restoration of peace, which you are impatient to express by stronger evidence than words. Should this be the case, a plain path is before you. While the eminence of the divine perfections renders it impossible for us to contribute to the happiness or augment the glory of the Creator, he has left among us, for the exercise of our virtue, the indigent and the afflicted, whom he has in an especial manner committed to our care, and appointed to represent himself. The objects of the institution for which I have this day the honour to plead are those of whom the very mention is sufficient to excite compassion in every feeling mind,—*the sick and the aged poor.** To be scantily provided with the necessaries of life, to endure cold, hunger, and nakedness, is a great calamity at all seasons; it is almost unnecessary to observe how much these evils are aggravated by the pressure of disease, when exhausted nature demands whatever the most tender assiduity can supply to cheer its languor and support its sufferings. It is the peculiar misfortune of the afflicted poor, that the very circumstance which increases their wants cuts off, by disqualifying them for labour, the means of their supply. Bodily affliction, therefore, falls upon them with an accumulated weight. Poor at best, when seized with sickness they become utterly destitute. Incapable even of presenting themselves to the eye of pity, nothing remains for them but silently to yield themselves up to sorrow and despair. The second class of objects which it is the design of this society to relieve are *the aged poor*. Here it is quite unnecessary for me to attempt to paint to you the sorrows of old age; a period indeed which, by a strange inconsistency, we all wish to reach, while we shrink with a sort of horror from the infirmities and sufferings inseparable from that melancholy season. What can be a more pitiable object than decrepitude sinking under the accumulated load of years and of penury? Arrived at that period when the most fortunate confess they have no pleasure, how forlorn is his situation who, destitute of the means of subsistence, has survived his last child or his last friend. Solitary and neglected, without comfort and without hope, depending for every thing on a kindness he has no means of conciliating, he finds himself left alone in a world to which he has ceased to belong, and is only felt in society as a burden it is impatient to shake off. Such are the objects to which this institution solicits your regard.

It is, in my humble opinion, a most excellent part of the plan of the society in whose behalf I address you, that no relief is adminis-

* It may be proper to remind the reader, that this discourse was preached for the benefit of a benevolent society, recently instituted at Cambridge, for the relief of the sick and aged poor; and that one principal motive with the author for complying with the request of the society in publishing it was a desire to excite the attention of the benevolent to the formation of similar societies in other parts. A further account of the institution will be found at the end of the sermon.

tered without first personally visiting the objects in their own abode. By such means the precise circumstances of each case are clearly ascertained, and imposture is sure to be detected. Where charity is administered without this precaution, as it is impossible to discriminate real from pretended distress, the most disinterested benevolence often fails of its purpose; and that is yielded to clamorous importunity which is withheld from lonely want. The mischief extends much farther. From the frequency of such imposition, the best minds are in danger of becoming disgusted with the exercise of pecuniary charity, till, from a mistaken persuasion that it is impossible to guard against deception, they treat the most abandoned and the most deserving with the same neglect. Thus the heart contracts into selfishness, and those delicious emotions which the benevolent Author of Nature implanted to prompt us to relieve distress become extinct; a loss greater to ourselves than to the objects to whom we deny our compassion. To prevent a degradation of character so fatal, allow me to urge on all whom Providence has blessed with the means of doing good, on those especially who are indulged with affluence and leisure, the importance of devoting some portion of their time in *inspecting*, as well as of their property in *relieving*, the distresses of the poor.

By this means an habitual tenderness will be cherished, which will heighten inexpressibly the happiness of life, at the same time that it will most effectually counteract that selfishness which a continual addictedness to the pursuits of avarice and ambition never fails to produce. As selfishness is a principle of continual operation, it needs to be opposed by some other principle, whose operation is equally uniform and steady; but the casual impulse of compassion excited by occasional applications for relief is by no means equal to this purpose Then only will benevolence become a prevailing habit of mind, when its exertion enters into the *system* of life, and occupies some stated portion of the time and attention. In addition to this, it is worth while to reflect how much consolation the poor must derive from finding they are the objects of personal attention to their more opulent neighbours; that they are acknowledged as brethren of the same family: and that, should they be overtaken with affliction or calamity, they are in no danger of perishing unpitied and unnoticed. With all the pride that wealth is apt to inspire, how seldom are the opulent truly aware of their high destination. Placed by the Lord of all on an eminence, and intrusted with a superior portion of his goods, to them it belongs to be the dispensers of his bounty, to succour distress, to draw merit from obscurity, to behold oppression and want vanish before them, and, accompanied wherever they move with perpetual benedictions, to present an image of Him, who, at the close of time, in the kingdom of the redeemed, will *wipe away tears from all faces.* It is surely unnecessary to remark how insipid are the pleasures of voluptuousness and ambition, compared to what such a life must afford, whether we compare them with respect to the present, the review of the past, or the prospect of the future.

It is probable some may object that such exertions, however amiable

in themselves, are rendered unnecessary by the system of parochial relief established in this country. To which it is obvious to reply, that however useful this institution may be, there must always be a great deal of distress which it can never relieve. Like all national institutions, it is incapable of bending from the rigour of general rules, so as to adapt itself to the precise circumstances of each respective case. Besides that it would be vain to expect much tenderness in the execution of a legal office, the machine itself, though it may be well suited to the general purpose it is intended to answer, is too large and unwieldy to touch those minute points of difference, those distinct kinds and gradations of distress to which the operation of personal benevolence will easily adapt itself. In addition to which, it will occur to those who reflect, that on account of the increasing demands of the poor, the parochial system, which presses hard upon many ill able to bear it, is already strained to the utmost.

Although the society in whose behalf I address you is but recently established, it has been enabled painfully to ascertain the vast proportion of its objects of the female sex,—a melancholy circumstance, deserving the serious attention of the public on more accounts than one. Of the cases which have occurred to their notice since the commencement of their labours, more than three-fourths have been of that description. The situation of females without fortune in this country is indeed deeply affecting. Excluded from all the active employments, in which they might engage with the utmost propriety, by men who, to the injury of one sex, add the disgrace of making the other effeminate and ridiculous, an indigent female, the object probably of love and tenderness in her youth, at a more advanced age a withered flower! has nothing to do but to retire and die. Thus it comes to pass that the most amiable part of our species, by a detestable combination in those who ought to be their protectors, are pushed off the stage as though they were no longer worthy to live when they ceased to be the objects of passion. How strongly on this account this society is entitled to your attention (as words would fail) I leave to the pensive reflection of your own bosoms.

To descant on the evils of poverty might seem entirely unnecessary (for what with most is the great business of life, but to remove it to the greatest possible distance?) were it not, that besides its being the most common of all evils, there are circumstances peculiar to itself, which expose it to neglect. The seat of its sufferings are the appetites, not the passions; appetites which are common to all, and which, being capable of no peculiar combinations, confer no distinction. There are kinds of distress founded on the passions, which, if not applauded, are at least admired in their excess, as implying a peculiar refinement of sensibility in the mind of the sufferer. Embellished by taste, and wrought by the magic of genius into innumerable forms, they turn grief into a luxury, and draw from the eyes of millions delicious tears. But no muse ever ventured to adorn the distresses of poverty or the sorrows of hunger. Disgusting taste and delicacy, and presenting nothing pleasing to the imagination, they are mere

misery in all its nakedness and deformity. Hence shame in the sufferer, contempt in the beholder, and an obscurity of station which frequently removes them from the view, are their inseparable portion. Nor can I reckon it on this account among the improvements of the present age, that by the multiplication of works of fiction the attention is diverted from scenes of real to those of imaginary distress; from the distress which demands relief to that which admits of embellishment: in consequence of which the understanding is enervated, the heart is corrupted, and those feelings which were designed to stimulate to active benevolence are employed in nourishing a sickly sensibility. To a most impure and whimsical writer,* whose very humanity is unnatural, we are considerably indebted for this innovation. Though it cannot be denied, that by diffusing a warmer colouring over the visions of fancy, sensibility is often a source of exquisite pleasures to others if not to the possessor, yet it should never be confounded with benevolence; since it constitutes at best rather the ornament of a fine than the virtue of a good mind. A good man may have nothing of it, a bad man may have it in abundance.

Leaving therefore these amusements of the imagination to the vain and indolent, let us awake to nature and truth; and in a world from which we must so shortly be summoned, a world abounding with so many real scenes of heart-rending distress as well as of vice and impiety, employ all our powers in relieving the one and in correcting the other; that when we have arrived at the borders of eternity, we may not be tormented with the awful reflection of having lived in vain.

If ever there was a period when poverty made a more forcible appeal than usual to the heart, it is unquestionably that which we have lately witnessed, the calamities of which, though greatly diminished by the auspicious event which we now celebrate, are far from being entirely removed. Poverty used in happier times to be discerned in a superior meanness of apparel and the total absence of ornament. We have seen its ravages reach the *man*, proclaiming themselves in the trembling step, in the dejected countenance, and the faded form. We have seen emaciated infants, no ruddiness in their cheeks, no sprightliness in their motions, while the eager and imploring looks of their mothers, reduced below the loud expressions of grief, have announced unutterable anguish and silent despair.

From the reflections which have been made on the peculiar nature of poverty, you will easily account for the prodigious stress which is laid on the duty of pecuniary benevolence in the Old and New Testaments. In the former, God delighted in assuming the character of the patron of the poor and needy; in the latter, the short definition of the religion which he approves *is to visit the fatherless and widow, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.* He who knew what was in man, well knew that, since the entrance of sin, selfishness was become the epidemic disease of human nature; a malady which almost every

* The author alludes to Sterne, the whole tendency of whose writings is to degrade human nature by resolving all our passions into a mere animal instinct, and that of the grossest sort. It was perfectly natural for such a writer to employ his powers in panegyrizing an ass.

thing tends to inflame, and the conquest of which is absolutely necessary before we can be prepared for the felicity of heaven; that whatever leads us out of ourselves, whatever unites us to him and his creatures in pure love, is an important step towards the recovery of his image; and finally, that his church would consist for the most part of *the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom*, whom he was resolved to shield from the contempt of all who respect his authority, by selecting them from the innumerable millions of mankind to be the peculiar representatives of himself.

Happy are they whose lives correspond to these benevolent intentions; who, looking beyond the transitory distinctions which prevail here, and will vanish at the first approach of eternity, honour God in his children, and Christ in his image. How much, on the contrary, are those to be pitied, in whatever sphere they move, who live to themselves, unmindful of the coming of their Lord. *When he shall come and shall not keep silence, when a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him*, every thing, it is true, will combine to fill them with consternation; yet, methinks, neither the voice of the archangel, nor the trump of God, nor the dissolution of the elements, nor the face of the Judge itself, from which the heavens will flee away, will be so dismaying and terrible to these men as the sight of the poor members of Christ; whom, having spurned and neglected in the days of their humiliation, they will then behold with amazement united to their Lord, covered with his glory, and seated on his throne. How will they be astonished to see them surrounded with so much majesty! How will they cast down their eyes in their presence! How will they curse that gold which will then eat their flesh as with fire, and that avarice, that indolence, that voluptuousness which will entitle them to so much misery! You will then learn that the imitation of Christ is the only wisdom: you will then be convinced it is better to be endeared to the cottage than admired in the palace; when to have wiped the tears of the afflicted, and inherited the prayers of the widow and the fatherless, shall be found a richer patrimony than the favour of princes.

ACCOUNT OF

THE BENEVOLENT SOCIETY,

FOR

THE RELIEF OF THE SICK AND AGED POOR

INSTITUTED AT CAMBRIDGE, 1801.

Blessed is he that *considereth* the poor.—Psalm xli. 1.

Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.—Matt. xxv. 40

That benevolence is an habitual duty, arising out of our constitution as rational and social creatures, and enforced upon us by the most powerful motives as Christians, no one will deny. The various exertions of the humane and the pious, in private circles and in public institutions, are so many proofs of the truth of this sentiment; but notwithstanding those exertions, there is still ample room for enlargement. Those persons who are in the habit of visiting the cottages or the chambers of the poor, are too frequently the melancholy witnesses of that extreme poverty, pining sickness, and poignant distress which energetically call for relief.

With the design of administering, in some degree, such relief, a number of persons have formed themselves into a society, the nature and objects of which are such, that it may with the greatest truth be said to *deserve*, and it can scarcely be doubted but it will *meet* with such encouragement as may render it a blessing to the poor of the town of Cambridge. It is likewise ardently hoped, that the society will meet with such further encouragement that its benevolent exertions may not be confined to the town, but extended to the neighbouring villages.

The first object of the society is, to afford pecuniary assistance to the sick and the aged poor. To select proper objects, and guard against the abuses attending indiscriminate relief, visiters will be appointed to examine and judge of the nature of every case, and to report the same to a committee of the society.

The second object of the society is, the moral and religious improvement of the objects relieved. *A word spoken in due season* (says the Wise Man) *how good is it!* The hour of affliction, the bed of sickness, afford the most seasonable opportunities for usefulness; and it is hoped that the heart may in a more peculiar manner be open to the best of impressions at such a season, and when under a sense of obligation for relief already administered.

In a society like the present, all distinctions of sects and parties are lost in the one general design of doing good; and the success which has attended societies, nearly similar, in different parts of this kingdom, and more particularly in the metropolis, in relieving the distress and ameliorating the condition of thousands and tens of thousands of our fellow-creatures, affords reason to hope, that under the divine blessing similar success will attend the society established in this town.

RULES.

I. Any person, of whatever denomination, age, or sex, disposed to assist this benevolent undertaking, may be admitted a subscriber; each subscriber, on admission, to pay *not less* than one shilling, and from twopence per week to any sum such subscriber may think proper.

II. That the business of this society be managed by a committee of fourteen persons, including the treasurer and secretary; five of whom shall be competent to transact business:—that the committee be open to any member of the society who may think proper to attend. In case of any vacancy in the committee by death or resignation, the remaining members of the committee be empowered to fill up such vacancy.

III. That the committee meet monthly at each other's houses, to receive reports, consider of cases, appoint visiters, and audit their accounts.

IV. That there be an annual general meeting, of which due notice will be given, when the state of the society shall be reported, and the treasurer, secretary, and committee appointed, to manage the concerns thereof.

V. That the SICK and the AGED be esteemed the *only* objects of the compassion of this society; and when the fund is reduced to the sum of five pounds, the cases of the sick alone shall be attended to.

VI. That no member be allowed to recommend a case until three months after his or her subscription hath commenced, nor if four months in arrears, until such arrears be discharged, provided they have received notice of the same.

VII. That no case be received but from a subscriber, who is expected to be well acquainted with the case recommended, and to report the particulars to one of the visiters.

VIII. That the visiters be appointed to administer relief, and not the person who recommends the case.

IX. That no subscribers, while they continue such, shall receive any relief from this society, nor shall any of those who conduct the business thereof receive any gratuity for their services.

The committee consists of an equal number of ladies and gentlemen; and persons of both sexes are appointed as visiters in rotation.

Subscriptions and donations are received by the treasurer, secretary, or any member of the committee.

At a general meeting of the society, held agreeably to public notice, at Mr. Alderman IND'S, on Monday, May 3, 1802:—It was resolved, That when the annual subscriptions of the society amount to *sixty* pounds, and the fund to *thirty* pounds, the committee be empowered to extend relief to other distressed objects besides the SICK and the AGED.

THE SENTIMENTS PROPER TO THE PRESENT CRISIS:

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT

BRIDGE-STREET, BRISTOL,

OCTOBER 19, 1803;

BEING THE DAY APPOINTED FOR A GENERAL FAST.

Uter esset, non uter imperaret.—*Cicero.*

ADVERTISEMENT.

Some apology is due to the public for this discourse appearing so long after it was preached. The fact is, the writer was engaged on an exchange of services for a month with his highly esteemed friend the Rev. Mr. Lowell, of Bristol, author of an excellent volume of sermons on practical subjects, at the time it was delivered, and had no opportunity of writing it till he returned. As it touches entirely on permanent topics, except what relates to the threatened invasion still impending over us, he knows not but it may be as suitable now as if it had appeared earlier. As it is, he commits it to the candour of the public. He has only to add, that the allusion to the effects of the tragic muse* should have been marked as a quotation, though the author knows not with certainty to whom to ascribe it. He believes it fell from the elegant pen of an illustrious female, Mrs. More.

Shelford, *Nov.* 30, 1803.

* Page 106.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

In this edition the author has corrected those errors of the press which in the former were very considerable. The Monthly Reviewers have founded a criticism entirely on one of them. The author had remarked, that infidelity was bred in the stagnant marshes of corrupted Christianity. The printer having omitted the word *corrupted*, the Reviewers remark that they never found in their map of Christianity any stagnant marshes. Having mentioned the Monthly Reviewers, he must be permitted to notice a most singular error into which they have been betrayed; that of supposing the author had confounded Aristotle with Mrs. More. It is well known to every one who has the smallest tincture of learning, that the great critic of antiquity represents the design of tragedy to be that of purifying the heart by pity and terror. It appeared to the author that infidelity, by the crimes and disorders it has produced in society, was not incapable of answering a similar purpose. He accordingly availed himself of the comparison; but it having occurred to him afterward that he had read a similar passage in Mrs. More, he thought it right to notice this circumstance in an advertisement; in which he says he apprehends the *allusion* to the tragic muse to belong to Mrs. More. It was not the opinion of its being the purpose of tragedy to purify the heart by pity and terror that he ascribed to that celebrated female; but *solely the allusion* to that opinion as illustrating the effect of infidelity. It is on this slender foundation, however, that the writer in the Monthly Review, with what design is best known to himself, has thought fit to represent him as ascribing to Mrs. More, as its author, a critical opinion which has been current for more than two thousand years. He is certain his words will not support any such construction, though he will not contend that he has expressed himself with all the clearness that might be wished.

He is sorry to find some passages towards the close of the sermon have given offence to persons whom he highly esteems. It has been objected, that the author has admitted to heaven a crowd of legislators, patriots, and heroes, whose title to that honour, on Christian principles, is very equivocal. In reply to which, he begs it to be remembered that the New Testament teaches, that *God is no respecter of persons; that in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him;* that we may be certain there will not be wanting in the innumerable assembly around the throne some of

the highest rank and of the most illustrious talents; and that the writer has qualified the character of those legislators and patriots whom he has represented as being in heaven with the epithet of *virtuous;* and this, after he had been at some *pains to explain what he comprehended in his idea of virtue.* He has been censured for attempting to animate the defenders of their country, by holding out the prospect of immortality, should they fall in the contest; and it has been asked why, instead of amusing them with this phantom, not endeavour to convince them of the necessity of religious preparation for death, when he must be aware it is very possible for men to die fighting in defence of their country, and yet fall short of future happiness. The writer is, indeed, fully persuaded, that in the concerns of salvation no reliance ought to be placed on a detached instance of virtuous conduct; that a solid piety is indispensably necessary, and that *without holiness no man can see the Lord.* But after having employed a great part of the preceding discourse in urging the necessity of repentance, he may surely be allowed for a moment to take it for granted that his admonitions have been attended to; and without treading over the same ground, in an address to men who are supposed to be just entering the field, to advert to topics more immediately connected with military prowess. It was never his intention to place worldly on a level with religious considerations, or to confound the sentiments of honour with the dictates of duty. But as the fear of death and the love of fame are both natural, and both innocent within certain limits, he was not aware there could be any impropriety, when he had already dwelt largely on religious topics, to oppose one natural sentiment to another. He who confines himself to such considerations violates the character of the Christian minister; he who neglects them entirely is wanting to the duties of the present crisis. The writer has only to add on this head, that in the addresses on similar occasions in the Scriptures there is rarely a greater mixture of religious topics, or more reserve in appealing to other motives, than is found here; so that if he has erred, his error is countenanced by the highest, that is, by inspired authority.

Finally: he has been censured for expressing in such strong terms his detestation of the character of Buonaparte. It has been said, that however just his representation may be, it is losing sight of the true design of a national fast, which is to confess and bewail our own sins, instead of inveighing against the sins of others. That this is the true end of a public fast the writer is convinced; on which account he has expressly cautioned his readers against placing reliance on their supposed superiority in virtue to their enemies. What he has said of the character of Buonaparte is with an entirely different view; it is urged, not as a ground of security, but as a motive to the most vigorous resistance. In this view it is impossible for it to be too deeply impressed. When a people are threatened with invasion, will it be affirmed that the personal character of the invader is of no consequence; and that it is not worth a moment's consideration whether he possess the virtuous moderation of a Washington, or the restless and

insatiable ambition of a Buonaparte? Though hostile invasion is an unspeakable calamity in any situation, and under any circumstances, yet it is capable of as many modifications as the dispositions and designs of the invaders; and if in the present instance the crimes of our enemy supply the most cogent motives to resistance, can it be wrong to turn his vices against himself; and, by imprinting a deep abhorrence of his perfidy and cruelty on the hearts of the people, to put them more thoroughly on their guard against their effects?

It may be thought a sermon on a fast-day should have comprehended a fuller enumeration of our national sins, and this was the author's design when he first turned his attention to the subject; but he was diverted from it by observing that these themes, from the press at least, seem to make no kind of impression; and that whatever the most skilful preacher can advance is fastidiously repelled as stale and professional declamation. The people in general are settled into an indifference so profound, with respect to all such subjects, that the preacher who arraigns their vices in the most vehement manner has no reason to be afraid of exciting their displeasure; but it is well if, long before he has finished his reproofs, he has not lulled them to sleep. From a due consideration of the temper of the times, he therefore thought it expedient to direct the attention to what appeared to him the chief source of public degeneracy, rather than insist at large on particular vices. He has in this edition, in some places, expanded the illustration where it appeared defective, as well as corrected the gross errors of the press which disfigured the discourse; being desirous, ere it descends to that oblivion which is the natural exit of such publications, of presenting it for once in an amended form, that it may at east be decently interred.

A SERMON.

JEREMIAH viii. 6.

I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.

THOUGH we are well assured the Divine Being is attentive to the conduct of men at all times, yet it is but reasonable to believe he is peculiarly so while they are under his correcting hand. As *he does not willingly afflict the children of men*, he is wont to do it slowly and at intervals, waiting, if we may so speak, to see whether the preceding chastisement will produce the sentiments which shall appease his anger, or those which shall confirm his resolution to punish. When sincere humiliation and sorrow for past offences take place, his displeasure subsides, he relents, and *repents himself of the evil.* Thus he speaks by the mouth of Jeremiah:—*At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.*

We are this day assembled at the call of our sovereign, to humble ourselves in the presence of Almighty God, under a sense of our sins, and to implore his interposition, that we may not be delivered into the hands of our enemies, nor fall a prey to the malice of those who hate us. It is surely then of the utmost consequence to see to it, that our humiliation be deep, our repentance sincere, and the dispositions we cherish, as well as the resolutions we form, suitable to the nature of the crisis and the solemnity of the occasion; such, in a word, as Omniscience will approve.

In the words of the text, the Lord reproaches the people of Israel with not speaking aright, and complains that, while he was waiting to hear the language of penitential sorrow and humiliation, he witnessed nothing but an insensibility to his reproofs, an obstinate perseverance in guilt, with a fatal eagerness to rush to their former courses. *He hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented himself of his iniquity, nor said, What have I done? but every one rushed to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.*

As the principles of the divine administration are invariable, and the situation of Great Britain at this moment not altogether unlike that of

Israel at the time this portion of prophecy was penned, perhaps we cannot better improve the present solemnity than by taking occasion, from the words before us, to point out some of those sentiments and views which appear in the present crisis not to be *right;* and, after exploding these, to endeavour to substitute more correct ones in their stead.

1. They who content themselves with tracing national judgments to their natural causes, without looking higher, entertain a view of the subject very inadequate to the demands of the present season. When you have imputed to the effects of an unparalleled convulsion on the Continent, to the relative situation of foreign powers, to the turbulent passions and insatiable ambition of an individual, the evils which threaten us, what have you done to mitigate those evils? What alleviation have you afforded to perplexity and distress? They still exist in all their force. Far be it from me to attempt to discourage political inquiry. An inquiry into the sources of great events, an attempt to develop the more hidden causes which influence, under God, the destiny of nations, is an exercise of the mental powers more noble than almost any other, inasmuch as it embraces the widest field, and grasps a chain whose links are the most numerous, complicated, and subtle. The most profound political speculations, however, the most refined theories of government, though they establish the fame of their authors, will be found, perhaps, to have had very little influence on the happiness of nations. As the art of criticism never made an orator or a poet, though it enables us to judge of their merits, so the comprehensive speculation of modern times, which has reviewed and compared the manners and institutions of every age and country, has never formed a wise government or a happy people. It arrives too late for that purpose, since it owes its existence to an extensive survey of mankind, under a vast variety of forms, through all those periods of national improvement and decay in which the happiest efforts of wisdom and policy have been already made. The welfare of a nation depends much less on the refined wisdom of the few than on the manners and character of the many: and as moral and religious principles have the chief influence in forming that character, so an acknowledgment of the hand of God, a deep sense of his dominion, is among the first of those principles. While we attend to the operation of second causes, let us never forget that there is a Being placed above them, who can move and arrange them at pleasure, and in whose hands they never fail to accomplish the purposes of his unerring counsel. The honour of the Supreme Ruler requires that his supremacy should be acknowledged, his agency confessed; nor is there any thing which he more intends by his chastisements than to extort this confession, or any thing he more highly resents than an attempt to exclude him from the concerns of his own world. *Wo unto them* (saith Isaiah) *that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! And the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation*

*of his hands.** The same prophet complains, that while the hand of Jehovah was lifted up they would not see; but he adds, *they shall see* If lighter chastisements will not suffice, he has heavier in reserve; if they despise his reproofs, he will *render his anger with fury, his rebukes with flames of fire.* He is resolved to overcome; and what must be the issue of a contest with Omnipotence it is as easy to foresee as it is painful to contemplate.

2. They *speak not aright* who, instead of placing their reliance on God for safety, repose only on an arm of flesh.—The perfect unanimity which prevails, the ardour to defend every thing dear to us which is expressed by all classes, the sacrifices cheerfully made, the labours sustained, and the mighty preparations by sea and land which the vigilance of government has set on foot to repel the enemy from our coasts, or ensure his discomfiture should he arrive, must be highly satisfactory to every well-disposed mind. They afford, as far as human means can afford, a well-founded prospect of success. Though there is, on this account, no room to despond, but much, on the contrary, to lead us to anticipate a favourable issue to the contest; yet nothing, surely, can justify that language of extravagant boast, that proud confidence in our national force, without a dependence upon God, which, however fashionable it may be, is as remote from the dictates of true courage as of true piety. True courage is firm and unassuming: true piety, serious and humble. In the midst of all our preparations, we shall, if we are wise, repose our chief confidence in Him who has every element at his disposal; who can easily disconcert the wisest councils, confound the mightiest projects, and save, when he pleases, by many or by few. While the vanity of such a pretended reliance on Providence as supersedes the use of means is readily confessed, it is to be feared we are not sufficiently careful to guard against a contrary extreme, in its ultimate effects not less dangerous. If to depend on the interposition of Providence without human exertion be to tempt God; to confide in an arm of flesh, without seeking his aid, is to deny him: the former is to be pitied for its weakness, the latter to be censured for its impiety; nor is it easy to say which affords the worst omen of success. Let us avoid both these extremes; availing ourselves of all the resources which wisdom can suggest or energy produce, let us still feel and acknowledge our absolute dependence upon God. With humble and contrite hearts, with filial confidence and affection, let us flee to his arms, that thus we may enjoy the united supports of reason and religion; and every principle, human and divine, may concur to assure us of our safety. Thus shall we effectually shun the denunciations so frequent and so terrible contained in his holy word against the vanity of human confidences. *Cursed is the man who trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm.*

3. Their conduct is not to be approved who, in the present crisis, indulge in *wanton* and *indiscriminate* censure of the measures of our

* Isaiah v. 11, 12.

rulers I say *wanton* and *indiscriminate*, because the privilege of censuring with moderation and decency the measures of government is essential to a free constitution; a privilege which can never lose its value in the eyes of the public till it is licentiously abused. The temperate exercise of this privilege is a most useful restraint on those errors and excesses to which the possession of power supplies a temptation. The free expression of the public voice is capable of overawing those who have nothing besides to apprehend; and the tribunal of public opinion is one whose decisions it is not easy for men in the most elevated stations to despise. To this we may add, that the unrestrained discussion of national affairs not only *gives weight* to the sentiments, but is eminently adapted to *enlighten the minds* of a people; and, consequently, to increase that general fund of talent and information from which the accomplishments even of statesmen themselves must be ultimately derived. While, therefore, we maintain this privilege with jealous care, let us be equally careful not to abuse it. There is a respect, in my apprehension, due to civil governors *on account of their office*, which we are not permitted to violate even when we are under the necessity of blaming their measures. When the apostle Paul was betrayed into an intemperate expression of anger against the Jewish high-priest, from an ignorance of the station he occupied, he was no sooner informed of this, than he apologized, and quoted a precept of the Mosaic law, which says, *Thou shalt not revile the gods nor curse the ruler of thy people.* In agreement with which, the New Testament subjoins to the duty of fearing God that of honouring the king; and frequently and emphatically inculcates submission to civil rulers, not so much from a fear of their power as from a respect for their office.

The ancient prophets, it is true, in the immediate discharge of their functions, appear to have treated kings and princes with no sort of ceremony. But before we establish their style into a precedent, let us recollect they were privileged persons, speaking expressly in the name of the Most High, who gave them his words and invested them for the moment with a portion of his majesty.

Apart from the personal characters of rulers, which are fluctuating and variable, you will find the apostles continually enjoin respect to government, *as government*, as a permanent ordinance of God, susceptible of various modifications from human wisdom, but essential, under some form or other, to the existence of society; and affording a representation, faint and inadequate it is true, but still a representation of the dominion of God over the earth. The wisdom of resting the duty of submission on this ground is obvious. The possession of office forms a plain and palpable distinction, liable to no ambiguity or dispute. Personal merits, on the contrary, are easily contested, so that if the obligation of obedience were founded on these, it would have no kind of force, nor retain any sort of hold on the conscience; the bonds of social order might be dissolved by an epigram or a song. The more liberal sentiments of respect for institutions being destroyed, nothing would remain to ensure tranquillity but a servile fear of men. In the

absence of those sentiments, as the mildest exertion of authority would be felt as an injury, authority would soon cease to be mild; and princes would have no alternative but that of governing their subjects with the severe jealousy of a master over slaves impatient of revolt: so narrow is the boundary which separates a licentious freedom from a ferocious tyranny! How incomparably more noble, salutary, and just are the maxims the apostles lay down on this subject. *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers: for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God: whosoever resisteth therefore the power resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same. For he is the minister of God to thee for good. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake.* We shall do well to guard against any system which would withdraw the duties we owe to our rulers and to society from the jurisdiction of conscience; that principle of the mind whose prerogative it is to prescribe to every other, and to pronounce that definitive sentence from which there is no appeal. A good man is accustomed to acquiesce in the idea of his duties as an ultimate object, without inquiring at every step why he should perform them, or amusing himself with imagining cases and situations in which they would be liable to limitations and exceptions. Instead of being curious after these (for I do not deny that such exceptions exist), let the great general duty of submission to civil authority be engraven on our hearts, wrought into the very habit of the mind, and made a part of our elementary morality.

At this season especially, when unanimity is so requisite, every endeavour to excite discontent, by reviling the character or depreciating the talents of those who are intrusted with the administration, is highly criminal. Without suspicion of flattery, we may be permitted to add, that their zeal in the service of their country cannot be questioned; that the vast preparations they have made for our defence claim our gratitude; and that if, in a situation so arduous, and in the management of affairs so complicated and difficult, they have committed mistakes, they are amply entitled to a candid construction of their measures.

Having been detained by these reflections somewhat longer than was intended, it is high time to return to those religious considerations which are more immediately appropriate to the present season. I therefore proceed to add,

4. That they appear to entertain mistaken sentiments who rely with too much confidence for success on our supposed superiority in virtue to our enemies. Such a confidence betrays inattention to the actual conduct of Providence. Wherever there is conscious guilt, there is room to apprehend punishment; nor is it for the criminal to decide where the merited punishment shall first fall. The cup of divine displeasure is, indeed, presented successively to guilty nations, but it by no means invariably begins with those who have run the greatest

career in guilt. On the contrary, *judgment often begins at the house of God;* and he frequently chastises his servants with severity before he proceeds to the destruction of his enemies. He assured Abraham his seed should be afflicted in Egypt for four hundred years, and that after their expiration *the nation that afflicted them he would judge.* The Assyrian monarchs, blind and impious idolaters, were permitted for a long period to oppress his chosen people; after which, to use his own words, *he punished the fruit of the proud heart of the king of Babylon;* and having accomplished his design in their correction, cast the rod into the fire. His conduct on such occasions resembles that of a parent, who, full of solicitude for the welfare of his children, animadverts upon faults in *them*, which he suffers to pass without notice in persons for whom he is less interested. Let us adore both the goodness and severity of God. The punishments which are designed to amend are inflicted with comparative vigilance and speed; those which are meant to destroy are usually long suspended, while the devoted victims pass on with seeming impunity.

But, independent of this consideration, that superiority in virtue which is claimed may be neither so great nor so certain as we are ready at first to suppose. To decide on the comparative guilt of two individuals, much more of two nations, demands a more comprehensive knowledge of circumstances than we are usually able to obtain. To settle a question of this sort, it is not enough barely to inspect the manners of each; for the quality of actions, considered in themselves, is one thing, and the comparative guilt of the persons to whom they belong is another. Before we can determine such a question, it is necessary to weigh and estimate the complicated influences to which they are exposed, the tendency of all their institutions, their respective degrees of information, and the comparative advantages and disadvantages under which they are placed. And who is equal to such a survey but the Supreme Judge, to whom it belongs to decide on the character both of nations and individuals?

Our enemies, it is true, in the moments of anarchy and madness, treated the religion of Jesus with an ostentation of insult; but it was not till that religion had been disguised and almost concealed from their view under a veil of falsehoods and impostures. The religion they rejected, debased by foreign infusions, mingled with absurd tenets, trifling superstitions, and cruel maxims, retained scarce any traces of the *truth as it is in Jesus.* The best of men were compelled to flee their country to avoid its persecuting fury, while the *souls under the altar* were employed day and night in accusing it before God. Religious inquiry was suppressed, the perusal of the word of God discountenanced, or rather prohibited, and that book to loose whose seals the Lamb condescended to be slain impiously closed by those who styled themselves its ministers. In this situation, it is less surprising if the body of the people,* misled by pretended philosophers, lost sight

* The author begs this remark may be understood to apply to the French people only, and not by any means to their infidel leaders. Of the infidelity of the latter, there needs no other solution to be given than the Scripture one: *They loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil*

of the feeble glimmerings of light which shone in the midst of so much obscurity. How far these considerations may extenuate before the Searcher of hearts the guilt of our enemies, it remains with him to determine. It is certain our guilt is accompanied with no such extenuation. With us the darkness has long been past, and the true light has arisen upon us. We have long possessed the clearest display of divine truth, together with the fullest liberty of conscience. The mysteries of the gospel have been unveiled, and its sanctifying truths pressed on the conscience by those *who, having received such a ministry*, knew it to be their duty *to use great plainness of speech.*

The language of invective, it is acknowledged, should be as carefully avoided in dispensing the word of God as that of adulation; but may we not, without reprehension, ask whether it is not a melancholy truth, that many of us have continued, in the midst of all this light, unchanged and impenitent; that if our enemies, with frantic impiety, renounced the forms of religion, we remain destitute of the power; and that, if they abandoned the Christian name, the name is nearly the whole of Christianity to which we can pretend? Still we are ready perhaps to exclaim with the people of Israel in the context, *We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us!* Let us hear the prophet's reply. *Surely in vain hath he made it; the pen of the scribes is in vain.* That law is most emphatically in vain which is the subject of boast without being obeyed. That dispensation of religion, however perfect, is in vain which cherishes the pride without reforming the manners of a people. Were we indeed a religious people, were the traces of Christianity as visible in our lives as they are in our creeds and confessions, we might derive solid support from the comparison of ourselves with others; but if the contrary be the fact, and *there are with us, even with us, sins against the Lord our God*, it will be our wisdom to relinquish this plea; and instead of boasting our superior virtue, to lie low in humiliation and repentance.

5. General lamentations and acknowledgments of the corruptions of the age, be they ever so well founded, fall very short of the real duties of this season.—It is not difficult, however painful to a good mind, to descant on the luxury, the venality, the impiety of the age, the irreligion of the rich, the immorality of the poor, and the general forgetfulness of God which pervades all classes. Such topics it would be utterly improper to exclude: but to dwell on these alone answers very little purpose. The sentiments they excite are too vague and indistinct to make a lasting impression. To invest ourselves with an imaginary character to represent the nation to which we belong, and combining into one group the vices of the times, to utter loud lamentations or violent invectives, is an easy task.

But this, whatever it be, is not repentance. After bewailing in this manner the sins of others, it is possible to continue quite unconcerned about our own. He who has been thus employed may have been merely acting a part; uttering confessions in which he never meant to take a personal share. He would be mortally offended, perhaps, to have it suspected that he himself had been guilty of any one of the

sins he has been deploring, or that he had contributed in the smallest degree to draw down the judgments he so solemnly deprecates. All has been transacted under a feigned character. Instead of *repenting himself of his iniquity, or saying, What have I done?* he secretly prides himself on his exemption from the general stain; and all the advantage he derives from his humiliations and confessions is to become more deeply enamoured of the perfections of what he supposes his real character. To such I would say, you are under a dangerous delusion; and the manner in which you perform the duties of this season completes that delusion. Your repentance, your feigned, your theatrical repentance tends to fix you in impenitence, and your humiliation to make you proud. Whatever opinion you may entertain of the character of others, your chief concern is at home. When you have broken off your own sins by righteousness, you may, with a more perfect propriety, deplore the sins of the nation; you may intercede for it in your prayers, and, within the limits of your sphere, edify it by your example; but till you have taken this first, this necessary step, you have done nothing; and should the whole nation follow your example and copy the spirit of your devotion, we should, after all, remain an impenitent, and finally a ruined people.

Allow me here, though it may be a digression, to endeavour the correction of a mistake, which appears to me to have greatly perplexed, as well as abridged, the duties of similar seasons to the present. The mistake to which I allude respects the true idea of *national sins*. Many seem to take it for granted, that nothing can justly be deemed a *national sin* but what has the sanction of the legislature or is committed under public authority. When they hear, therefore, of national sins, they instantly revolve in their minds something which they apprehend to be criminal in the conduct of public affairs. That iniquity when established by law is more conspicuous, that it tends to a more general corruption, and, by poisoning the streams of justice at their source, produces more extensive mischief than under any other circumstances, it is impossible to deny. In a country, moreover, where the people have a voice in the government, the corruption of their laws must first have inhered and become inveterate in their manners.

Such corruption is therefore not so much an *instance* as a *monument* of national degeneracy; but it by no means follows that this is the only just idea of national sins. National sins are the sins of the nation. The system which teaches us to consider a people as acting merely through the medium of prince or legislature, however useful or necessary to adjust the intercourse of nations with each other, is too technical, too artificial, too much of a compromise with the imperfection essential to human affairs, to enter into the views or regulate the conduct of the Supreme Being. He sees things as they are; and as the greater part of the crimes committed in every country are perpetrated by its inhabitants in their individual character, it is these, though not to the exclusion of others, which chiefly provoke the divine judgments.

To consider national sins as merely comprehending the vices of rulers, or the iniquities tolerated by law, is to place the duties of such a season as this in a very *invidious* and a very *inadequate* light. It is to render them invidious: for upon this principle our chief business on such occasions is, to single out for attack those whom we are commanded to obey, to descant on public abuses, and to hold up to detestation and abhorrence the supposed delinquencies of the government under which we are placed. How far such a conduct tends to promote that broken and contrite heart which is Heaven's best sacrifice, it requires no great sagacity to discover.

It is, moreover, to exhibit a most *inadequate* view of the duties of this season. It confines humiliation and confession to a mere scantling of the sins which pollute a nation. Under the worst governments (to say nothing of our own) the chief perversions of right are not found in courts of justice, nor the chief outrages on virtue in the laws, nor the greatest number of atrocities in the public administration. Civil government, the great antidote which the wisdom of man has applied to the crimes and disorders that spring up in society, can scarcely ever become, in no free country at least is it possible for it to become, *itself* the chief crime and disorder. It may, on occasion, prescribe *particular things* that are wrong, and sometimes reward where it ought to punish; but unless it bent its force, for the most part, to the encouragement of virtue and the suppression of vice; unless the general spirit of its laws were in unison with the dictates of conscience, it would soon fall to pieces from intestine weakness and disorder.

A last appeal, in all moral questions, lies to the Scriptures, where you will invariably find the prophets, in their boldest paintings of national vice, in their severest denunciations of divine anger, are so far from confining their representation to the conduct of rulers, that they are seldom mentioned in comparison of the people. Their attention is chiefly occupied in depicting the corruptions which prevailed in the several classes of the community, among which the crimes of princes and judges are most severely reprehended, not as representatives, but as parts of the whole. They knew nothing of that refinement by which a people are at liberty to transfer their vices to their rulers. To confirm this remark by adducing all the instances the prophecies afford would be to quote a great part of the Old Testament: it is sufficient to refer you to the twenty-second chapter of Ezekiel, where, after portraying the manners of the age with the peculiar vehemence of style which distinguished that holy prophet, he closes his description with these remarkable words: *And I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none.*

Let us not deceive ourselves with vain words. The just displeasure of God, as it will by no means spare the great, when they are criminal and impenitent, so neither is it excited by their wickedness alone. It is a fire, supplied from innumerable sources, to which every crime contributes its quota; and which every portion of guilt, wherever it is found, causes to burn with augmented violence.

Having thus endeavoured to expose those grounds of confidence which appear replete with danger, it will not be necessary to dwell long on the remaining part of the subject. To be aware of the several wrong paths into which we are liable to be misled is the principal requisite to the finding out that which is alone the true and right one.

The first duty to which our situation summons us is a devout acknowledgment of the hand of God. To this, whatever be the instruments employed, religion instructs us ultimately to refer national calamities as well as national blessings. *That the Lord reigns* is one of those truths which lie at the very basis of piety; nor is there any more consoling. It fills the heart, under a right impression of it, with a cheerful hope and unruffled tranquillity, amid the changes and trials of life, which we shall look for in vain from any other quarter. It is this chiefly which formed and distinguished the character of those who are emphatically said to have *walked with God*. Important as this disposition is, under all circumstances, it is what more especially suits the present crisis, and which the events we have witnessed are so eminently calculated to impress. The Psalmist accounts for the wicked's refusing to seek after God, from their having no changes; and certainly an uninterrupted series of prosperity is not favourable to piety. But if *we* forget God, we cannot plead even this slight extenuation; for the times that are *passing over us*, in the solemn phrase of Scripture, are eventful beyond all former example or conception. The fearful catastrophes, the strange vicissitudes, the sudden revolutions of fortune, which, thinly scattered heretofore over a long tract of ages, poets and historians have collected and exhibited to the terror and the commiseration of mankind, have crowded upon us with so strange a rapidity, and thickened so fast, that they have become perfectly familiar, and are almost numbered among ordinary events. Astonishment has exhausted itself; and whatever occurs, we cease to be surprised. In short, every thing around us, in the course of a few years, is so changed, that, did not the stability of the material form a contrast to the fluctuations of the moral and political world, we might be tempted to suppose we had been removed to another state, or that all those things that have happened were but the illusions of fancy and the visions of the night. How consoling, at such a season, to look up to that Being *who is a very present help in trouble, the dwelling-place of all generations;* who changes all things, and is himself unchanged! And, independent of its impiety, how cruel is that philosophy which, under pretence of superior illumination, by depriving us of this resource, would leave us exposed to the tossings of a tempestuous ocean, without compass, without solace, and without hope!

But besides this acknowledgment of the general administration of the Deity, it behooves us to feel and confess, in national calamities, the tokens of his displeasure. The evils which overtake nations are the just judgments of the Almighty. I am perfectly aware of the disadvantages under which we labour, when we insist on this topic, from its being so trite and familiar. Instead of troubling you with a general and, I fear, unavailing descant on the manners of the age, I shall there-

fore content myself with calling your attention to a very few of what appear to me the most alarming symptoms of national degeneracy. Here we shall not insist so much on the progress of infidelity (though much to be deplored) as on an evil to which, if we are not greatly mistaken, that progress is chiefly to be ascribed: I mean a gradual departure from the peculiar truths, maxims, and spirit of Christianity. Christianity, issuing perfect and entire from the hands of its Author, will admit of no mutilations nor improvements; it stands most secure on its own basis; and without being indebted to foreign aids, supports itself best by its own internal vigour. When, under the pretence of simplifying it, we attempt to force it into a closer alliance with the most approved systems of philosophy, we are sure to contract its bounds, and to diminish its force and authority over the consciences of men. It is dogmatic; not capable of being advanced with the progress of science, but fixed and immutable. We may not be able to perceive the use or necessity of some of its discoveries, but they are not on this account the less binding on our faith; just as there are many parts of nature* whose purposes we are at a loss to explore, of which, if any person were bold enough to arraign the propriety, it would be sufficient to reply that God made them. They are both equally the works of God, and both equally partake of the mysteriousness of their Author. This *integrity* of the Christian faith has been insensibly impaired; and the simplicity of mind with which it should be embraced gradually diminished. While the outworks of the sanctuary have been defended with the utmost ability, its interior has been too much neglected, and the fire upon the altar suffered to languish and decay. The truths and mysteries which distinguished the Christian from all other religions have been little attended to by some, totally denied by others; and while infinite efforts have been made by the utmost subtlety of argumentation to establish the truth and authenticity of revelation, few have been exerted in comparison to show what it really contains. The doctrines of the fall and of redemption, which are the two grand points on which the Christian dispensation hinges, have been too much neglected. Though it has not yet become the fashion (God forbid it ever should!) to deny them, we have been too much accustomed to confine the mention of them to oblique hints and distant allusions. They are too often reluctantly conceded rather than warmly inculcated, as though they were the weaker or less honourable parts of Christianity, from which we were in haste to turn away our eyes, although it is in reality these very truths which have in every age inspired the devotion of the church and the rapture of the redeemed. This alienation from the distin-

* "We ought not," says the great Bacon, "to attempt to draw down or submit the mysteries of God to our reason; but, on the contrary, to raise and advance our reason to the divine truth. In this part of knowledge, touching divine philosophy, I am so far from noting any deficiency, that I rather note an excess; whereto I have digressed because of the extreme prejudice which hath religion and philosophy have received from being *commixed together*, as that which undoubtedly will make an heretical religion and a fabulous philosophy."

This observation appears to me to deserve the most profound meditation; and lest the remarks on this subject should appear presumptuous from so inconsiderable a person, I thought it requisite to fortify myself by so great an authority.

guishing truths of our holy religion accounts for a portentous peculiarity among Christians, their being ashamed of a book which they profess to receive as the word of God. The votaries of all other religions regard their supposed sacred books with a devotion which consecrates their errors, and makes their very absurdities venerable in their eyes. They glory in that which is their shame: we are ashamed of that which is our glory. Indifference and inattention to the truths and mysteries of revelation have led, by an easy transition, to a dislike and neglect of the book which contains them; so that, in a Christian country, nothing is thought so vulgar as a serious appeal to the Scriptures; and the candidate for fashionable distinction would rather betray a familiar acquaintance with the most impure writers than with the words of Christ and his apostles. Yet we complain of the growth of infidelity, when nothing less could be expected than that some should declare themselves infidels where so many had completely forgotten they were Christians. They who sow the seed can with very ill grace complain of the abundance of the crop; and when we have ourselves ceased to abide in the words and maintain the honour of the Saviour, we must not be surprised at seeing some advance a step further, by openly declaring they are none of his. The consequence has been such as might be expected,—an increase of profaneness, immorality, and irreligion.

The traces of piety have been wearing out more and more from our conversation, from our manners, from our popular publications, from the current literature of the age. In proportion as the maxims and spirit of Christianity have declined, infidelity has prevailed in their room; for infidelity is, in reality, nothing more than a noxious spawn (pardon the metaphor) bred in the stagnant marshes of corrupted Christianity.

A lax theology is the natural parent of a lax morality. The peculiar motives, accordingly, by which the inspired writers enforce their moral lessons, the love of God and the Redeemer, concern for the honour of religion, and gratitude for the inestimable benefits of the Christian redemption, have no place in the fashionable systems of moral instruction.* The motives almost exclusively urged are such as take their rise from the present state, founded on reputation, on honour, on health, or on the tendency of the things recommended to promote, under some form or other, the acquisition of worldly advantages. Thus even morality itself, by dissociating it from religion, is made to cherish the love of the world, and to bar the heart more effectually against the approaches of piety.

Here I cannot forbear remarking a great change which has taken place in the whole manner of reasoning on the topics of morality and religion, from what prevailed in the last century, and, as far as my information extends, in any preceding age. This, which is an age of revolutions, has also produced a strange revolution in the method of

* If the reader wishes for a further statement and illustration of these melancholy facts, he may find it in Mr. Wilberforce's celebrated book on religion; an inestimable work, which has, perhaps done more than any other to rouse the insensibility and augment the piety of the age.

viewing these subjects, the most important by far that can engage the attention of man. The simplicity of our ancestors, nourished by the sincere milk of the word, rather than by the tenets of a disputatious philosophy, was content to let morality remain on the firm basis of the dictates of conscience and the will of God. They considered virtue as something *ultimate*, as bounding the mental prospect. They never supposed for a moment there was any thing to which it stood merely in the relation of a *means*, or that within the narrow confines of this momentary state any thing great enough could be found to be its *end* or *object*. It never occurred to their imagination, that that religion which professes to render us superior to the world is in reality nothing more than an instrument to procure the temporal, the physical good of individuals or of society. In their view it had a nobler destination; it looked forward to eternity: and if ever they appear to have assigned it any end or object beyond itself, it was a union with its Author in the perpetual fruition of God. They arranged these things in the following order:—religion, comprehending the love, fear, and service of the Author of our being, they placed first; social morality, founded on its dictates, confirmed by its sanctions, next; and the mere physical good of society they contemplated as subordinate to both. Every thing is now reversed. The pyramid is inverted: the first is last, and the last first. Religion is degraded from its pre-eminence, into the mere handmaid of social morality; social morality into an instrument of advancing the welfare of society; and the world is all in all. Nor have we deviated less from the example of antiquity than from that of our pious forefathers. The philosophers of antiquity, in the absence of superior light, consulted with reverence the permanent principles of nature, the dictates of conscience, and the best feelings of the heart, which they employed all the powers of reason and eloquence to unfold, to adorn, to enforce; and thereby formed a luminous commentary *on the law written on the heart*. The virtue which they inculcated grew out of the stock of human nature: it was a warm and living virtue. It was the moral man, possessing in every limb and feature, in all its figure and movements, the harmony, dignity, and variety which belong to the human form: an effort of unassisted nature to restore that image of God which sin had mutilated and defaced. Imperfect, as might be expected, their morality was often erroneous; but in its great outlines it had all the stability of the human constitution, and its fundamental principles were coeval and coexistent with human nature. There could be nothing fluctuating and arbitrary in its more weighty decisions, since it appealed every moment to *the man within the breast:* it pretended to nothing more than to give voice and articulation to the inward sentiments of the heart, and conscience echoed to its oracles. This, wrought into different systems and under various modes of illustration, was the general form which morality exhibited from the creation of the world till our time. In this state revelation found it; and, correcting what was erroneous, supplying what was defective, and confirming what was right by its peculiar sanctions, superadded a number of supernatural truths and holy mys-

teries. How is it, that on a subject on which men have thought deeply from the moment they began to think, and where, consequently, whatever is entirely and fundamentally new must be fundamentally false; how is it, that in contempt of the experience of past ages, and of all precedents human and divine, we have ventured into a perilous path which no eye has explored, no foot has trod, and have undertaken, after the lapse of six thousand years, to *manufacture* a morality of our own, to decide by a cold calculation of interest, by a leger-book of profit and of loss, the preference of truth to falsehood, of piety to blasphemy, and of humanity and justice to treachery and blood?

In the science of morals we are taught by this system to consider nothing as yet done; we are invited to erect a fresh fabric on a fresh foundation. All the elements and sentiments which entered into the essence of virtue before are melted down and cast into a new mould. Instead of appealing to any internal principle, every thing is left to calculation and determined by expediency. In executing this plan the jurisdiction of conscience is abolished, her decisions are classed with those of a superannuated judge, and the determination of moral causes is adjourned from the interior tribunal to the noisy forum of speculative debate. Every thing, without exception, is made an affair of calculation, under which are comprehended not merely the duties we owe to our fellow-creatures, but even the love and adoration which the Supreme Being claims at our hands. His claims are set aside, or suffered to lie in abeyance until it can be determined how far they can be admitted on the principles of expediency, and in what respect they may interfere with the acquisition of temporal advantages. Even here nothing is yielded to the suggestions of conscience, nothing to the movements of the heart: all is dealt out with a sparing hand, under the stint and measure of calculation. Instead of being allowed to love God with all our heart and all our strength, the first and great commandment, the portion of love assigned him is weighed out with the utmost scrupulosity, and the supposed excess more severely censured than the real deficiency.

Thus, by a strange inversion, the *indirect influence* of Christianity, in promoting the temporal good of mankind, is mistaken for its *principal end;* the skirts of her robe are confounded with her body, and the *powers of the world to come*, instead of raising our thoughts and contemplations from earth to heaven, from the creature to the Creator, are made subservient to the advancement of secular interests and passions. How far these sentiments accord with the dictates of inspiration the most unlettered Christian may easily decide. *Love not the world*, said the disciple who leaned on the breast of his Lord. *neither the things that are in the world; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. And the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.* Such was the idea entertained by an inspired apostle of Christian virtue. Let us now turn to the modern philosopher. Virtue, he will inform us (including the whole sum of our duties), is merely an expedient for promoting the interests and advantages of the present world—of

that world which, in the eyes of John, was passing away, and whose value he so solemnly depreciates. What admirable consistency! What elevated theology! If we can suppose this holy apostle acquainted with what passes on earth, what pleasure it must afford his glorified spirit to find his sentiments so well understood and so faithfully interpreted!

In former times it was supposed that one of the most effectual means of improvement in virtue was the moral culture of the heart; and *to keep it with all diligence, because out of it are the issues of life*, was thought an advice deserving the most serious attention. To examine frequently the state of the conscience, and to check the first risings of disorder there, was judged to be of the last importance.

It is easy to see how this moral discipline must fare under the doctrine of expediency—a doctrine which teaches man to be looking continually abroad:—a doctrine which not only justifies but enjoins a distrust of the suggestions of the inward monitor; which will not permit the best feelings of the heart, its clearest dictates, its finest emotions, to have the smallest influence over the conduct; and instead of yielding any thing to their direction, cites them at its bar.

As this fashion of reducing every moral question to a calculation of expedience is a most important innovation, it would be strange if it had not produced a change in the manners of society. In fact, it *has* produced an entirely new cast of character, equally remote from the licentious gayety of high life and the low profligacy which falls under the lash of the law: a race of men distinguished by a calm and terrible ferocity, resembling Cæsar in this only, that, as it was said of him, they have come with sobriety to the ruin of their country. The greatest crimes no longer issue from the strongest passions, but from the coolest head. Vice and impiety have made a new conquest, and have added the regions of speculation to their dominion. The patrons of impurity and licentiousness have put on the cloak of the philosopher: maxims the most licentious have found their way into books of pretended morality, and have been inculcated with the airs of a moral sage.* The new doctrine having withdrawn the attention from all internal sentiments as well as destroyed their authority, the distinction between right and wrong was easily lost sight of, the boundaries of vice and virtue confounded, and the whole substance of morals fell a prey to contending disputants. Nor is this the only or the worst consequence which has followed. A callous indifference to all moral distinctions is an almost inseparable effect of the familiar application of this theory. Virtue is no longer contemplated as the object of any particular *sentiment* or *feeling*, but solely with regard to its effects on society: it is what it *produces*, not what it *is*, that is alone considered, just as an accountant is indifferent to the *shape* and *appearance* of the figures, and attends simply to their amount. Crimes and virtues are equally *candidates* for approbation, nor must the heart betray the least preference, which would be to prejudge the cause; but must maintain

* The unholy speculations of Mr Godwin were founded entirely on this basis

a sacred neutrality till expedience, whose hand never trembles in the midst of the greatest horrors, has weighed in her impartial balance their consequences and effects. In the mean time they are equally *candidates*, we repeat it again, for our approbation, and equally entitled to it, provided the passions can be deceived into an opinion, and this is not difficult, that they will come to the same thing at the foot of the account. Hence that intrepidity in guilt which has cased the hearts of the greatest adepts in this system as with triple brass. Its seeds were sown by some of these with an unsparing hand in France, a congenial soil, where they produced a thick vegetation. The consequences were soon felt. The fabric of society tottered to its base, the earth shook under their feet; the heavens were involved in darkness, and a voice more audible than thunder called upon them to desist. But, unmoved amid the uproar of elements, undismayed by that voice which astonishes nature and appals the guilty, these men continued absorbed in their calculations. Instead of revering the judgments, or confessing the finger of God, they only made more haste (still on the principle of expediency) to desolate his works and destroy his image, as if they were apprehensive the shades of a premature night might fall and cover their victims!

But it is time to conclude this discussion, which has, perhaps, already fatigued by its length. I cannot help expressing my apprehension, that this desecration of virtue, this incessant domination of physical over moral ideas, of ideas of expedience over those of right, having already dethroned religion, and displaced virtue from her ancient basis, will, if it is suffered to proceed, ere long shake the foundation of states and endanger the existence of the civilized world. Should it ever become popular, should it ever descend from speculation into common life, and become the practical morality of the age, we may apply to such a period the awful words of Balaam:—*Who shall live when God doth this?* No imagination can portray, no mind can grasp its horrors; nor when the angel in the Apocalypse, to whom the keys are intrusted, shall be commissioned to open the bottomless pit, will it send forth a thicker cloud of pestilential vapour. If the apparent simplicity of this system be alleged in its favour, I would say, it is the simplicity of meanness, a simplicity which is its shame, a daylight which reveals its beggary. If an air of obscurity, on the contrary, is objected against that of better times, let it be remembered that every science has its *ultimate questions*, boundaries which cannot be passed; and that if these occur earlier in morals than in other inquiries, it is the natural result of the immensity of the subject, which, touching human nature in every point, and surrounding it on all sides, renders it difficult, or rather impossible, to trace it in all its relations, and view it in all its extent. Meanwhile, the shades which envelop, and will perhaps always envelop it in some measure, are not without their use, since they teach the two most important lessons we can learn,—the vanity of our reason, and the grandeur of our destiny.

It is not improbable some may be offended at the warmth and freedom of these remarks: my apology, however, rests on the infinite

importance of the subject, my extreme solicitude to impress what appear to me right sentiments respecting it, together with the consideration, that the confidence which ill becomes the innovators of yesterday, however able, may be pardoned in the defenders, however weak, of a system which has stood the test and sustained the virtue of two thousand years.* Let us return, then, to the safe and sober paths of our ancestors; adhering, in all moral questions, to the dictates of conscience regulated and informed by the divine word; happy to enjoy, instead of sparks of our own kindling, the benefit of those luminaries which, placed in the moral firmament by a potent hand, have guided the church from the beginning in her mysterious sojourn to eternity. *Stand in the way, and see; and ask for the old path, which is the good way, and walk therein; and ye shall find rest for your souls.*

Instead of demolishing the temple of Christian virtue from a presumptuous curiosity to inspect its foundations, let us rejoice they are laid too deep for our scrutiny. Let us *worship* in it; and, along, with the *nations of them that are saved, walk in its light.*

Having endeavoured to point out the source of our degeneracy, in a departure from the doctrines and spirit of Christianity, I hasten to despatch the remainder of this discourse; nor will it detain you long.

Whoever has paid attention to the manners of the day must have perceived a remarkable innovation in the use of moral terms, in which we have receded more and more from the spirit of Christianity. Of this the term employed to denote a lofty sentiment of personal supe-

* The system which founds morality on utility, a utility, let it be *always* remembered, confined to the purposes of the present world, issued with ill omen from the school of infidelity. It was first broached, I believe, certainly first brought into general notice, by Mr. Hume, in his Treatise on Morals, which he himself pronounced *incomparably the best* he ever wrote. It was incomparably the best for his purpose; nor is it easy to imagine a mind so acute as his did not see the effect it would have in setting morality and religion afloat, and substituting for the stability of principle the looseness of speculation and opinion. It has since been rendered popular by a succession of eminent writers; by one especially (I doubt not with intentions very foreign from those of Mr. Hume), whose great services to religion in other respects, together with my high reverence for his talents, prevent me from naming. This venerable author, it is probable, little suspected to what lengths the principle would be carried, or to what purposes it would be applied in other hands. Had he foreseen this, I cannot but imagine he would have spared this part of his acute speculations.

We have, happily, preserved to us from antiquity two complete Treatises on Morals, in which the authors profess to give us a complete view of our duties; the one composed by the greatest master of reason, the other of eloquence, the world ever saw. The first of these has distinguished, classified, and arranged the elements of *social morality*, which is all he could reach in the absence of revelation, with that acuteness, subtilty, and precision for which he was so eminently distinguished. Whoever attentively peruses his Treatise, the Nicomachian Morals, I mean, will find a perpetual reference to the inward sentiments of the breast. He builds every thing on the human constitution. He all along takes it for granted that there is a moral impress on the mind, to which, without looking abroad, we may safely appeal. In a word, Aristotle never lost the moralist in the accountant. He has been styled the interpreter of Nature, and has certainly shown himself a most able commentator on the *law written on the heart.* For Cicero, in all his philosophical works, as well as in his Offices, where he treats more directly on these subjects, shows the most extreme solicitude, as though he had a prophetic glance of what was to happen, to keep the moral and natural world apart, to assert the supremacy of virtue, and to recognise those sentiments and vestiges from which he educes, with the utmost elevation, the *contempt of human things.* How humiliating the consideration, that with superior advantages, our moral systems should be infinitely surpassed in warmth and grandeur by those of pagan times; and that the most jejune and comfortless that ever entered the mind of man, and the most abhorrent from the spirit of religion, should have ever become popular in a Christian country! This departure from the precedents of antiquity will not, by those who are capable of forming a judgment, be easily imputed to the superiority of our talents; it is rather the result of that tendency to *degradation* which has long marked our progress. Along with the simplicity of faith and a reverence for the Scriptures, our respect for the dignity (rightly understood) of human nature, and tenderness for its best interests, have been gradually impaired. A fearlessness of consequences, a hardihood of mind, a disposition to sacrifice every thing to originality, or to a pretended philosophical precision, have succeeded in their place. This, in my humble opinion, has been the great bane of modern speculation; and has rendered so much of it wild, ferocious, and destructive.

riority supplies an obvious instance. In the current language of the times, *pride* is scarcely ever used but in a favourable sense. It will, perhaps, be thought the mere change of a term is of little consequence; but be it remembered, that any remarkable innovation in the use of moral terms betrays a proportionable change in the ideas and feelings they are intended to denote. As pride has been transferred from the list of vices to that of virtues, so humility, as a natural consequence, has been excluded, and is rarely suffered to enter into the praise of a character we wish to commend, although it was the leading feature in that of the Saviour of the world, and is still the leading characteristic of his religion; while there is no vice, on the contrary, against which the denunciations are so frequent as pride. Our conduct in this instance is certainly rather extraordinary, both in what we have embraced and in what we have rejected; and it will surely be confessed, we are somewhat unfortunate in having selected that vice as the particular object of approbation which God had already selected as the especial mark at which he aims the thunderbolts of his vengeance.

Another symptom of degeneracy appears in the growing disregard to the external duties of religion; the duties more especially of the Lord's day, and of public worship. It is supposed by such as have the best means of information, that throughout the kingdom the number who regularly assemble for worship is far inferior to those who neglect it; that in our great towns and cities they are not one-fourth of the people, and in the metropolis a much smaller proportion. It is easy to foresee how the leisure afforded by the Christian Sabbath will be employed by those who utterly forget the design of its institution. It is somewhat remarkable that here the extremes meet, and that the public duties of religion are most slighted by the highest and the lowest classes of society: by the former, I fear, from indolence and pride; by the latter, from ignorance and profligacy.

Too many of the first description, when they do attend, it is in such a manner as makes it evident they esteem it merely an act of condescension, to which they submit as an example to their inferiors, who, penetrating the design, and imitating their indifference rather than their devotion, are disgusted with a religion which they perceive has no hold on their superiors, and is only imposed upon themselves as a badge of inferiority and a muzzle of restraint. Could the rich and noble be prevailed upon for a moment to attend to the instructions of their Lord, instead of making their elevated rank a reason for neglecting these duties, they would learn that there are none to whom they are so necessary; since there are none whose situation is so perilous, whose responsibility is so great, and whose salvation is so arduous.

Here fidelity compels me to advert to a circumstance which I mention with sincere reluctance, because it implies something like a censure on the conduct of those whom it is our duty to respect. You are probably aware I mean the assigning part of the Sunday to *military exercises*. When we consider how important an institution the Christian Sabbath is, how essential to the maintenance of public worship, which is itself essential to religion, and what a barrier it opposes to the

impiety and immorality of the age; is it not to be lamented that it should ever have been, in the smallest degree, infringed by legislative authority? The rest of the Sabbath had been already too much violated, its duties too much neglected; but this is the first instance of the violation of it being publicly recommended and enjoined,* at a time too when we are engaged with an enemy whose very name conveys a warning against impiety. Our places of worship have been thinned by the absence of those who have been employed in military evolutions, and of a still greater number of gazers, whom such spectacles attract. Nor is the time lost from religious duties so much to be considered as that tumult and hurry of mind, utterly incompatible with devotion, which are inseparable from military ideas and preparations. Surely it could never be the intention of the legislature, though such has been the effect, to detach the defenders of their country from the worshippers of God: nor is it to be supposed they adverted to the influence which a precedent of such high authority must have in divesting the Sabbath of its sanctity in the eyes of the people, and of establishing the fatal epoch whence it was no longer to be revered as the ordinance of Heaven. They had, we will believe, no such intention; but the innocence of the intention abates nothing of the mischief of the precedent.

As it is foreign from my purpose to make a complete enumeration of national sins, which would not only be a most painful task in itself, but quite incompatible with the limits of this discourse, I shall content myself with the mention of one more proof of the degeneracy of our manners. This proof is found in that almost universal profaneness which taints our daily intercourse, and which has risen to such a height as to have become a melancholy characteristic of our country. In no nation under heaven, probably, has the profanation of sacred terms been so prevalent as in this Christian land. The name even of the Supreme Being himself, and the words he has employed to denounce the punishments of the impenitent, are rarely mentioned but in anger or in sport; so that were a stranger to our history to witness the style of our conversation, he would naturally infer we considered religion as a detected imposture; and that nothing more remained than, in return for the fears it had inspired, to treat it with the insult and derision due to a fallen tyrant. It is difficult to account for a practice which gratifies no passion and promotes no interest, unless we ascribe it to a certain vanity of appearing superior to religious fear, which tempts men to make bold with their Maker. If there are hypocrites in religion, there are also, strange as it may appear, hypocrites in impiety,—men who make an ostentation of more irreligion than they possess. An ostentation of this nature, the most irrational in the records of human folly, seems to lie at the root of profane swearing. It may not be improper to remind such as indulge this practice, that they need not insult their Maker to show that they do not fear him; that they may relinquish this vice without danger of being supposed to be devout,

* The Book of Sports, in Charles the Second's reign, is not an exception, as this, though sufficiently censurable, was not considered as a violation of the Sabbath considered as a day of rest.

and that they may safely leave it to other parts of their conduct to efface the smallest suspicion of their piety. To view this practice in the most favourable light, it indicates, as has been observed by a great living writer,* "a mind over which religious considerations have little influence." It also sufficiently accounts for that propensity to ridicule piety which is one of our national peculiarities. It would be uncandid to suppose, that at the best times there was more piety on the Continent than here: be this as it may, it never appears to have exposed its possessors to contempt; nor was the sublime devotion of Fenelon and of Pascal ever considered as forming a shade to their genius. The reverence for religion had not been worn away by the familiar abuse of its peculiar terms.

It will be expected something should be said on the *slave-trade*. Its enormity no words can express. But here we must feel a mixture of satisfaction and regret;—of satisfaction, at finding it has excited such general indignation among the people; of regret, that notwithstanding this, it should still be continued. By the most earnest and unanimous remonstrances, addressed to those who alone could abolish it, the people have purged themselves from this contamination. Their application was unsuccessful. The guilt and turpitude of this traffic now rest upon the heads of those who sanction and of those who conduct it. From some recent events in the western colonies, it seems not unlikely the Deity is about to take this affair into his own hands, and to accomplish by his interposition what has been denied to the prayer of the nation.

It is far from being a pleasing employ; it is painful, it is distressing, to dwell on such topics; but it is necessary. Our disease has gone too far to admit of palliatives; our wounds are too deep to be healed till they are searched and probed to the bottom. The only safe expedient which remains to be adopted is an immediate return to God; *to forsake every one his evil way, and the violence that is in his hands, and cry mightily to him: and who can tell, if God will turn and repent, and turn away his fierce anger from us?* At the same time, let it be remembered that repentance is a personal concern. Instead of losing ourselves in a crowd, and resting in general confessions, we ought each one to examine his own ways and turn from his own iniquity. We shall not fail if we have the least piety to lament the prevalence of sin around us, but we can repent only *of our own:* and however, in the present mixed and imperfect state, we may share in the judgments and calamities which other men's sins draw down, it is those we commit ourselves which alone can do us ultimate injury. Our continuance here is but for a short time; after which as many as are *purified and made white* will remove into another world, be placed under a higher economy, and be put in possession of *a kingdom that cannot be moved.*

Let me remind you that repentance is a duty of greater extent than many are apt to suppose, who, confining their view, on such occasions as these, to a few of the grosser disorders of their lives, pay little attention to the heart: they are satisfied with feeling a momentary

* Dr. Paley.

compunction and attempting a partial reformation, instead of crying with the royal penitent, *create in me a clean heart!* They determine to break off particular vices,—an excellent resolution as far as it goes, —without proposing to themselves a life of habitual devotion, without imploring, under a sense of weakness, that grace which can alone renew the heart, making, in the words of our Lord, the tree good, that the fruit may be good also. Let it cost us what uneasiness it may, let us resolve at the present season to examine our ways, to become acquainted with the state of our consciences, to enter with the candle of the Lord into the inmost recesses of the heart, and the *chambers of imagery*, whatever disorder or defilement they may conceal, or whatever alarm the knowledge of ourselves may excite; since to be apprized of danger is the first step to safety, and it will be infinitely better for us to judge and accuse ourselves now, than to be judged and condemned hereafter. Happy those to whom a seasonable alarm shall suggest the means of a perpetual security. We need be under no apprehension lest the cherishing of the sentiments we have recommended should lead to despondency. We have a High-priest, *who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God.* In the midst of the deepest humiliation we are invited to look up to him with an humble reliance on the efficacy of his blood which cleanses from all sin; and to intrust our prayers and our duties, disordered and imperfect at best, into his hands, that he may mingle them with the incense of his intercession, and present them with acceptance before God.

When Nineveh was threatened with destruction by the prophet Jonah, tidings were brought to the king, who proclaimed a fast. Penetrated with the profoundest awe of the divine displeasure, he enjoined a rigorous abstinence from food, which extended even to the brute creation, who were also commanded to be covered with sackcloth For in the eyes of that penitent prince it seemed proper that every thing should wear an air of mourning and desolation, while it lay under the frown of its Maker. He himself *rose from his throne, laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.* He rightly judged that the glitter of state, the distinctions of rank, and the splendour of royalty should disappear at a moment when all classes were alike awaiting their doom; at a moment when the greatest as well as the least were made to feel they were potsherds of the earth, ready to be crumbled into dust. Such exemplary humiliation averted the divine anger, and Nineveh was spared. If our gracious sovereign has (as we humbly believe) descended this day from his elevation, and laying aside his robes, humbled himself in the dust before the Majesty of Heaven; if his nobles have followed his example, and the people have resolved to *turn every one from his evil way*, the duties of the season will afford a surer defence than all our military preparations: our salvation will issue from the Being *whose fire is in Zion, and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.*

As a people, the most certain means of ensuring lasting prosperity, and of enabling us to transmit, unimpaired, to those who shall succeed us the rich inheritance devolved from our fathers, will be a speedy

return to the spirit and practice of the gospel. We shall ill consult the true interests of revelation by disguising its peculiarities, in hope of conciliating the approbation of infidels, and of adapting it more to their taste—a mistaken and dangerous policy, by which we run imminent risk of catching *their* contagion, without imparting the benefit of *its* truths. Let us not for a moment blench from its mysteries: they are *mysteries of godliness;* and, however much they may surpass human reason, bear the distinct impress of a divine hand. We rejoice that they *are mysteries*, so far from being ashamed of them on that account; since the principal reason why they are and must ever continue such, is derived from their elevation, from their *unsearchable riches*, and undefinable grandeur. In fine, let us draw our religion and morality entirely from the word of God, without seeking any deeper foundation for our duties than the *will* of the Supreme Being, an implicit and perfect acquiescence in which is the *highest virtue* a creature can attain.

Amid many unfavourable symptoms of the state of morals among us, there are others of a contrary nature. We may hope infidelity has nearly run its length. In truth, its sophistry, in the eyes of men of sense, has been much discredited by the absurdity of its tenets; and if any have been in danger of being seduced by the talents of its advocates, they have commonly found a sufficient antidote in their lives. We have learned to prize revelation more than ever since we have seen the ludicrous mistakes as well as serious disasters of those mystics of impiety who chose rather to walk by an internal light than enjoy the benefits of its illumination. They have edified us much without intending it: they have had the effect which the great critic of antiquity assigns as the purpose of the tragic Muse, that of purifying the heart by pity and terror. Their zeal has excited an equal degree of ardour in a better cause, and their efforts to extirpate religion have been opposed by contrary efforts, to diffuse its influence at home and abroad, to a degree unexampled in modern times. A growing unanimity has prevailed among the good in different parties, who, finding a centre of union in the great truths of revelation, and in a solicitude for its interests, are willing to merge their smaller differences in a common cause. The number of the sincerely pious, we trust, is increasing among us, whose zeal, so far from suffering abatement from the confidence of infidelity, has glowed with a purer and more steady flame than ever. These are pleasing indications that the presence of the *Holy One of Israel* is still in the midst of us.

How it may please the Ruler of the universe to dispose the destinies of the two most powerful nations of the earth, which are at this moment laid in the balance together, it is impossible for us with certainty to predict. But when we consider how many of his sincere worshippers, how large a portion of his church, together with how rich a fund of wisdom, of talents, and of all those elements of social order and happiness which he must approve, are enclosed within the limits of this highly favoured land, we cannot believe he intends to give it up a prey to his enemies. Our insular situation is favourable, our resources

prodigious, and the preparations which have long been making apparently every way equal to the danger of the crisis: but still we would place our ultimate reliance on Him who abases the proud and exalts the lowly. It would be presumption to imagine it in my power to add any thing to those considerations which have already produced such a general movement in defence of our liberties. The cause speaks for itself: it excites feelings which words are ill able to express; involving every object and motive which can engage the solicitude, affect the interests, or inflame the heart of man. After a series of provocations and injuries reciprocally sustained and retaliated, the dispute between us and our enemies is brought to a short issue; it is no longer which of the two nations shall have the ascendant, but which shall continue a nation: it is a struggle for existence, not for empire. It must surely be regarded as a happy circumstance that the contest did not take this shape at an earlier period, while many were deceived by certain specious pretences of liberty into a favourable opinion of our enemies' designs. The popular delusion is past; the most unexampled prodigies of guilt have dispelled it; and, after a series of rapine and cruelty, have torn from every heart the last fibres of mistaken partiality. The crimes of those with whom we have to contend are legible in every part of Europe. There is scarcely a man to be found who is not most perfectly acquainted with the meaning of that freedom they profess to bestow; that it is a freedom from the dominion of laws to pass under the yoke of slavery, and from the fear of God to plunge into crimes and impiety; an impious barter of all that is good for all that is ill, through the utmost range and limits of moral destiny. Nor is it less easy to develop the character of our principal enemy. A man bred in the school of ferocity, amid the din of arms and the tumult of camps; his element, war and confusion; who has changed his religion with his uniform, and has not spared the assassination of his own troops; it is easy to foresee what treatment such a man will give to his enemies should they fall into his power; to those enemies especially who, saved from the shipwreck of nations, are preserving, as in an ark, the precious remains of civilization and order; and whom, after destroying the liberties of every other country, he envies the melancholy distinction of being the only people he has not enslaved. Engaged with such an enemy, no weak hopes of moderation or clemency can tempt us for a moment to relax in our resistance to his power; and the only alternative which remains is, to conquer or to die.

Hence that unexampled unanimity which distinguishes the present season. In other wars we have been a divided people: the effect of our external operations has been in some measure weakened by intestine dissension. When peace has returned the breach has widened, while parties have been formed on the merits of particular men, or of particular measures. These have all disappeared; we have buried our mutual animosities in a regard to the common safety. The sentiment of self-preservation, the first law which nature has impressed, has absorbed every other feeling; and the fire of liberty has melted down the discordant sentiments and minds of the British empire into

one mass, and propelled them in one direction. Partial interests and feelings are suspended, the spirits of the body are collected at the heart, and we are awaiting with anxiety, but without dismay, the discharge of that mighty tempest which hangs upon the skirts of the horizon, and to which the eyes of Europe and of the world are turned in silent and awful expectation. While we feel solicitude let us not betray dejection, nor be alarmed at the past successes of our enemy, which are more dangerous to himself than to us, since they have raised him from obscurity to an elevation which has made him giddy, and tempted him to suppose every thing within his power. The intoxication of his success is the omen of his fall. What though he has carried the flames of war throughout Europe, and *gathered as a nest the riches of the nations, while none peeped, nor muttered, nor moved the wing;* he has yet to try his fortune in another field; he has yet to contend on a soil filled with the monuments of freedom, enriched with the blood of its defenders; with a people who, animated with one soul, and inflamed with zeal for their laws and for their prince, are armed in defence of all that is dear or venerable, their wives, their parents, their children, the sanctuary of God, and the sepulchre of their fathers. We will not suppose there is one who will be deterred from exerting himself in such a cause by a pusillanimous regard to his safety, when he reflects that he has already lived too long who has survived the ruin of his country; and that he who can enjoy life after such an event deserves not to have lived at all. It will suffice us, if our mortal existence, which is at most but a span, be co-extended with that of the nation which gave us birth. We will gladly quit the scene with all that is noble and august, innocent and holy; and instead of wishing to survive the oppression of weakness, the violation of beauty, and the extinction of every thing on which the heart can repose, welcome the shades which will hide from our view such horrors.

From the most fixed principles of human nature, as well as from the examples of all history, we may be certain the conquest of this country, should it be permitted to take place, will not terminate in any ordinary catastrophe, in any much less calamitous than utter extermination. Our present elevation will be the exact measure of our future depression, as it will measure the fears and jealousies of those who subdue us. While the smallest vestige remains of our former greatness, while any trace or memorial exists of our having been once a flourishing and independent empire, while the nation breathes they will be afraid of its recovering its strength, and never think themselves secure of their conquest till our navy is consumed, our wealth dissipated, our commerce extinguished, every liberal institution abolished, our nobles extirpated; whatever in rank, character, and talents gives distinction in society culled out and destroyed, and the refuse which remains swept together into a putrefying heap by the besom of destruction. The enemy will not need to proclaim his triumph; it will be felt in the more expressive silence of extended desolation.

Recollect for a moment his invasion of Egypt, a country which had never given him the slightest provocation; a country so remote from

the scene of his crimes, that it probably did not know there was such a man in existence; (happy ignorance, could it have lasted!) but while he was looking around him, like a vulture perched on an eminence, for objects on which he might gratify his insatiable thirst of rapine, he no sooner beheld the defenceless condition of that unhappy country than he alighted upon it in a moment. In vain did it struggle, flap its wings, and rend the air with its shrieks: the cruel enemy, deaf to its cries, had infixed his talons and was busy in sucking its blood, when the interference of a superior power forced him to relinquish his prey and betake himself to flight. Will that vulture, think you, ever forget his disappointment on that occasion, or the numerous wounds, blows, and concussions he received in a ten years' struggle? It is impossible;—it were folly to expect it. He meditates, no doubt, the deepest revenge. He who saw nothing in the simple manners and blood-bought liberties of the Swiss to engage his forbearance, nothing in proclaiming himself a Mahometan to revolt his conscience, nothing in the condition of defenceless prisoners to excite his pity, nor in that of the companions of his warfare, sick and wounded in a foreign land, to prevent him from despatching them by poison, will treat in a manner worthy of the impiety and inhumanity of his character a nation which he naturally dislikes as being free, dreads as the rivals of his power, and abhors as the authors of his disgrace.

Though these are undoubted truths, and ought to be seriously considered, yet I would rather choose to appeal to sentiments more elevated than such topics can inspire. To form an adequate idea of the duties of this crisis, it will be necessary to raise your minds to a level with your station, to extend your views to a distant futurity, and to consequences the most certain, though most remote. By a series of criminal enterprises, by the successes of guilty ambition, the liberties of Europe have been gradually extinguished: the subjugation of Holland, Switzerland, and the free towns of Germany has completed that catastrophe; and we are the only people in the eastern hemisphere who are in possession of equal laws and a free constitution. Freedom, driven from every spot on the Continent, has sought an asylum in a country which she always chose for her favourite abode: but she is pursued even here, and threatened with destruction. The inundation of lawless power, after covering the whole earth, threatens to follow us here; and we are most exactly, most critically placed in the only aperture where it can be successfully repelled in the Thermopylæ of the universe. As far as the interests of freedom are concerned, the most important by far of sublunary interests, you, my countrymen, stand in the capacity of the federal representatives of the human race; for with you it is to determine (under God) in what condition the latest posterity shall be born; their fortunes are intrusted to your care, and on your conduct at this moment depends the colour and complexion of their destiny. If liberty, after being extinguished on the Continent, is suffered to expire here, whence is it ever to emerge in the midst of that thick night that will invest it? It remains with you then to decide whether that freedom, at whose voice the kingdoms of Europe awoke

from the sleep of ages, to run a career of virtuous emulation in every thing great and good; the freedom which dispelled the mists of superstition, and invited the nations to behold their God; whose magic touch kindled the rays of genius, the enthusiasm of poetry, and the flame of eloquence; the freedom which poured into our lap opulence and arts, and embellished life with innumerable institutions and improvements, till it became a theatre of wonders; it is for you to decide whether this freedom shall yet survive, or be covered with a funeral pall, and wrapped in eternal gloom. It is not necessary to await your determination. In the solicitude you feel to approve yourselves worthy of such a trust, every thought of what is afflicting in warfare, every apprehension of danger must vanish, and you are impatient to mingle in the battle of the civilized world. Go then, ye defenders of your country,* accompanied with every auspicious omen; advance with alacrity into the field, where God himself musters the hosts to war. Religion is too much interested in your success not to lend you her aid; she will shed over this enterprise her selectest influence. While you are engaged in the field many will repair to the closet, many to the sanctuary; the faithful of every name will employ that prayer which has power with God; the feeble hands which are unequal to any other weapon will grasp the sword of the Spirit; and from myriads of humble, contrite hearts the voice of intercession, supplication, and weeping will mingle in its ascent to heaven with the shouts of battle and the shock of arms.

While you have every thing to fear from the success of the enemy, you have every means of preventing that success, so that it is next to impossible for victory not to crown your exertions. The extent of your resources, under God, is equal to the justice of your cause. But should Providence determine otherwise, should you fall in this struggle, should the nation fall, you will have the satisfaction (the purest allotted to man) of having performed your part; your names will be enrolled with the most illustrious dead, while posterity, to the end of time, as often as they revolve the events of this period (and they will incessantly revolve them), will turn to you a reverential eye, while they mourn over the freedom which is entombed in your sepulchre. I cannot but imagine the virtuous heroes, legislators, and patriots of every age and country are bending from their elevated seats to witness this contest, as if they were incapable, till it be brought to a favourable issue, of enjoying their eternal repose. Enjoy that repose, illustrious immortals! Your mantle fell when you ascended; and thousands, inflamed with your spirit, and impatient to tread in your steps, are ready to *swear by him that sitteth upon the throne, and liveth for ever and ever*, they will protect freedom in her last asylum, and never desert that cause which you sustained by your labours and cemented with your blood. And thou, sole Ruler among the children of men, to whom the shields of the earth belong, *gird on thy sword, thou Most Mighty:* go forth with our hosts in the day of battle! Impart, in

* A company of volunteers attended public worship on this occasion.—Ed.

addition to their hereditary valour, that confidence of success which springs from thy presence! Pour into their hearts the spirit of departed heroes! Inspire them with thine own; and, while led by thy hand, and fighting under thy banners, open thou their eyes to behold in every valley, and in every plain, what the prophet beheld by the same illumination—chariots of fire, and horses of fire! *Then shall the strong man be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark; and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.*

THE ADVANTAGES OF KNOWLEDGE TO THE LOWER CLASSES

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT

HERVEY LANE, LEICESTER,

FOR THE BENEFIT OF A SUNDAY SCHOOL.

[Published in 1810.]

ADVERTISEMENT.

To attempt to disarm the severity of criticism by humiliation or entreaty would be a hopeless task. Waiving every apology, the author, therefore, has only to remark, that the motives of a writer must ever remain a secret, but the *tendency* of what he writes is capable of being ascertained; and is in reality the only consideration in which the public are interested. The author is concerned at an unexpected coincidence in the text between this and a very excellent discourse, delivered on a similar occasion, and published by his much esteemed friend, the Rev. Francis Cox. The coincidence was entirely accidental, and the text in each instance being employed very much in the manner of a motto, it is hoped the train of thought will be found sufficiently distinct. He cannot conclude without recommending to the public, and to the young especially, the serious perusal of the abovementioned animated and impressive discourse.

A SERMON.

PROVERBS xix. 2.

That the heart be without knowledge, it is not good.

THROUGHOUT every part of this book, the author is copious and even profuse in the praises of knowledge. To stimulate to the acquisition of it, and to assist in the pursuit, is the professed design with which it was penned. *To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity; to give subtlety to the simple, to the young men knowledge and discretion.*

Though it is evident from many passages, that in the encomiums to which we have referred the author had principally in view divine knowledge, yet from other parts it is equally certain he by no means intended to exclude from these commendations knowledge in general; and as we propose this afternoon to recommend to your attention the Sabbath-day school established in this place, a few reflections on the utility of knowledge at large, and of religious knowledge in particular, will not be deemed unseasonable.

I. Let me request your attention to a few remarks on the utility of knowledge in general. It must strike us, in the first place, that the extent to which we have the faculty of acquiring it forms the most obvious distinction of our species. In inferior animals it subsists in so small a degree, that we are wont to deny it to them altogether; the range of their knowledge, if it deserve the name, is so extremely limited, and their ideas so few and simple. Whatever is most exquisite in their operations is referred to an instinct, which, working within a narrow compass, though with undeviating uniformity, supplies the place and supersedes the necessity of reason. In inferior animals, the knowledge of the whole species is possessed by each individual of the species, while man is distinguished by numberless diversities in the scale of mental improvement. Now, to be destitute in a remarkable degree of an acquisition which forms the appropriate possession of human nature is degrading to that nature, and must proportionably disqualify it for reaching the end of its creation.

As the power of acquiring knowledge is to be ascribed to reason, so the attainment of it mightily strengthens and improves it, and thereby

enables it to enrich itself with further acquisitions. Knowledge in general expands the mind, exalts the faculties, refines the taste of pleasure, and opens numerous sources of intellectual enjoyment. By means of it we become less dependent for satisfaction upon the sensitive appetites, the gross pleasures of sense are more easily despised, and we are made to feel the superiority of the spiritual to the material part of our nature. Instead of being continually solicited by the influence and irritation of sensible objects, the mind can retire within herself, and expatiate in the cool and quiet walks of contemplation. The Author of nature has wisely annexed a pleasure to the exercise of our active powers, and particularly to the pursuit of truth, which, if it be in some instances less intense, is far more durable than the gratifications of sense, and is on that account incomparably more valuable. Its duration, to say nothing of its other properties, renders it more valuable. It may be repeated without satiety, and pleases afresh on every reflection upon it. These are self-created satisfactions, always within our reach, not dependent upon events, not requiring a peculiar combination of circumstances to produce or maintain them; they rise from the mind itself, and inhere, so to speak, in its very substance. Let the mind but retain its proper functions, and they spring up spontaneously, unsolicited, unborrowed, and unbought. Even the difficulties and impediments which obstruct the pursuit of truth serve, according to the economy under which we are placed, to render it more interesting. The labour of intellectual search resembles and exceeds the tumultuous pleasures of the chase, and the consciousness of overcoming a formidable obstacle, or of lighting on some happy discovery, gives all the enjoyment of a conquest, without those corroding reflections by which the latter must be impaired. Can we doubt that Archimedes, who was so absorbed in his contemplations as not to be diverted by the sacking of his native city, and was killed in the very act of meditating a mathematical theorem, did not, when he exclaimed εὑρήκα! εὑρήκα! I have found it! I have found it! feel a transport as genuine as was ever experienced after the most brilliant victory?

But to return to the moral good which results from the acquisition of knowledge: it is chiefly this, that by multiplying the mental resources, it has a tendency to exalt the character, and, in some measure, to correct and subdue the taste for gross sensuality. It enables the possessor to beguile his leisure moments (and every man has such) in an innocent at least, if not in a useful manner. The poor man who can read, and who possesses a taste for reading, can find entertainment at home without being tempted to repair to the public-house for that purpose. His mind can find him employment when his body is at rest; he does not lie prostrate and afloat on the current of incidents, liable to be carried whithersoever the impulse of appetite may direct. There is in the mind of such a man an intellectual spring urging him to the pursuit of *mental* good; and if the minds of his family also are a little cultivated, conversation becomes the more interesting, and the sphere of domestic enjoyment enlarged. The calm satisfaction which books afford puts him into a disposition to relish more exqui-

sitely the tranquil delight inseparable from the indulgence of conjugal and parental affection; and as he will be more respectable in the eyes of his family than he who can teach them nothing, he will be naturally induced to cultivate whatever may preserve, and shun whatever would impair, that respect. He who is inured to reflection will carry his views beyond the present hour; he will extend his prospect a little into futurity, and be disposed to make some provision for his approaching wants; whence will result an increased motive to industry, together with a care to husband his earnings and to avoid unnecessary expense. The poor man who has gained a taste for good books will in all likelihood become thoughtful; and when you have given the poor a habit of thinking, you have conferred on them a much greater favour than by the gift of a large sum of money, since you have put them in possession of the *principle* of all legitimate prosperity.

I am persuaded that the extreme profligacy, improvidence, and misery which are so prevalent among the labouring classes in many countries are chiefly to be ascribed to the want of education. In proof of this we need only cast our eyes on the condition of the Irish compared with that of the peasantry in Scotland. Among the former you behold nothing but beggary, wretchedness, and sloth: in Scotland, on the contrary, under the disadvantages of a worse climate and more unproductive soil, a degree of decency and comfort, the fruit of sobriety and industry, is conspicuous among the lower classes. And to what is this disparity in their situation to be ascribed except to the influence of education? In Ireland the education of the poor is miserably neglected; very few of them can read, and they grow up in a total ignorance of what it most befits a rational creature to understand: while in Scotland the establishment of free schools* in every parish, an essential branch of the ecclesiastical constitution of the country, brings the means of instruction within the reach of the poorest, who are there inured to decency, industry, and order.

Some have objected to the instruction of the lower classes, from an apprehension that it would lift them above their sphere, make them dissatisfied with their station in life, and, by impairing the habits of subordination, endanger the tranquillity of the state; an objection devoid surely of all force and validity. It is not easy to conceive in what manner instructing men in their duties can prompt them to neglect those duties, or how that enlargement of reason which enables them to comprehend the true grounds of authority and the obligation to obedience should indispose them to obey. The admirable mechanism of society, together with that subordination of ranks which is essential to its subsistence, is surely not an elaborate imposture, which the exercise of reason will detect and expose. The objection we have stated

* In the "Edinburgh Christian Instructor" for 1816, the slight mistake which occurs above, in reference to "free schools" in North Britain, is thus corrected. "The truth is, that *free* schools could never have effected that improvement in the manners and intelligence of the lower orders in Scotland for which they are so remarkable; and we have reason to bless the judicious liberality of our ancestors, who contented themselves with bringing education within the reach of the lower orders, by allowing limited salaries to the schoolmasters, *in aid of the school wages*, instead of going to the hurtful extreme which tends to render teachers careless and parents indifferent."—Ed.

implies a reflection on the social order, equally impolitic, invidious, and unjust. Nothing in reality renders legitimate governments so insecure as extreme ignorance in the people. It is this which yields them an easy prey to seduction, makes them the victims of prejudices and false alarms, and so ferocious withal, that their interference in a time of public commotion is more to be dreaded than the eruption of a volcano.

The true prop of good government is opinion, the perception on the part of the subject of benefits resulting from it,—a settled conviction, in other words, of its being a public good. Now, nothing can produce or maintain that opinion but knowledge, since opinion is a form of knowledge. Of tyrannical and unlawful governments, indeed, the support is fear, to which ignorance is as congenial as it is abhorrent from the genius of a free people. Look at the popular insurrections and massacres in France: of what description of persons were those ruffians composed who, breaking forth like a torrent, overwhelmed the mounds of lawful authority? Who were the cannibals that sported with the mangled carcasses and palpitating limbs of their murdered victims, and dragged them about with their teeth in the gardens of the Tuilleries? Were they refined and elaborated into these barbarities by the efforts of a too polished education? No: they were the very scum of the people, destitute of all moral culture, whose atrocity was only equalled by their ignorance, as might well be expected, when the one was the legitimate parent of the other. Who are the persons who, in every country, are most disposed to outrage and violence, but the most ignorant and uneducated of the poor? to which class also chiefly belong those unhappy beings who are doomed to expiate their crimes at the fatal tree; few of whom, it has recently been ascertained, on accurate inquiry, are able to read, and the greater part utterly destitute of all moral or religious principle.

Ignorance gives a sort of eternity to prejudice, and perpetuity to error. When a baleful superstition, like that of the church of Rome, has once got footing among a people in this situation, it becomes next to impossible to eradicate it; for it can only be assailed with success by the weapons of reason and argument, and to these weapons it is impassive. The sword of ethereal temper loses its edge when tried on the scaly hide of this leviathan. No wonder the church of Rome is such a friend to ignorance; it is but paying the arrears of gratitude in which she is deeply indebted. How is it possible for her not to hate that light which would unveil her impostures and detect her enormities.

If we survey the genius of Christianity, we shall find it to be just the reverse. It was ushered into the world with the injunction *Go and teach all nations*, and every step of its progress is to be ascribed to instruction. With a condescension worthy of its Author, it offers information to the meanest and most illiterate; but extreme ignorance is not in a state of mind favourable to it. The first churches were planted in cities (and those the most celebrated and enlightened), drawn neither from the very highest nor the very lowest classes; the former too often the victims of luxury and pride, the latter sunk in extreme

stupidity; but from the middle orders, where the largest portion of virtue and good sense has usually resided. In remote villages, its progress was extremely slow, owing unquestionably to that want of mental cultivation which rendered them the last retreats of superstition; insomuch that in the fifth century the abetters of the ancient idolatry began to be denominated *Pagani*, which properly denotes the inhabitants of the country, in distinction from those who reside in towns. At the Reformation, the progress of the Reformed faith went hand in hand with the advancement of letters; it had every where the same friends and the same enemies, and, next to its agreement with the Holy Scriptures, its success is chiefly to be ascribed, under God, to the art of printing, the revival of classical learning, and the illustrious patrons of science attached to its cause. In the representation of that glorious period usually styled the Millennium, when religion shall universally prevail, it is mentioned as a conspicuous feature, that *men shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.* That period will not be distinguished from the preceding by men's minds being more torpid and inactive, but rather by the consecration of every power o the service of the Most High. It will be a period of remarkable llumination, during which *the light of the moon shall be as the light of he sun, and the light of the sun as that of seven days.* Every useful alent will be cultivated, every art subservient to the interests of man be improved and perfected; learning will amass her stores, and genius emit her splendour; but the former will be displayed without ostentation, and the latter shine with the softened effulgence of humility and love.

II. We have hitherto spoken of the advantages of *knowledge in general;* we proceed to notice the utility of *religious knowledge* in particular. Religion, on account of its intimate relation to a future state, is every man's proper business, and should be his chief care. Of knowledge in general, there are branches which it would be preposterous in the bulk of mankind to attempt to acquire, because they have no immediate connexion with their duties, and demand talents which nature has denied, or opportunities which Providence has withheld. But with respect to the primary truths of religion, the case is different; they are of such daily use and necessity, that they form not the materials of mental luxury, so properly, as the food of the mind. In improving the character, the influence of general knowledge is often feeble and always indirect; of religious knowledge the tendency to purify the heart is immediate, and forms its professed scope and design. *This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.* To ascertain the character of the Supreme Author of all things, to know, as far as we are capable of comprehending such a subject, what is his moral disposition, what the situation wo stand in towards him, and the principles by which he conducts his administration, will be allowed by every considerate person to be of the highest consequence. Compared to this, all other speculations or inquiries sink into insignificance because every event that can befall

us is in his hands, and by his sentence our final condition must be fixed. To regard such an inquiry with indifference is the mark not of a noble but of an abject mind, which, immersed in sensuality, or amused with trifles, *deems itself unworthy of eternal life.* To be so absorbed in worldly pursuits as to neglect future prospects is a conduct that can plead no excuse until it is ascertained beyond all doubt or contradiction that there is no hereafter, and that nothing remains but that *we eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.* Even in that case to forego the hope of immortality without a sigh,—to be gay and sportive on the brink of destruction, in the very moment of relinquishing prospects on which the wisest and best in every age have delighted to dwell, is the indication of a base and degenerate spirit. If existence be a good, the eternal loss of it must be a great evil: if it be an evil, reason suggests the propriety of inquiring why it is so, of investigating the maladies by which it is oppressed. Amid the darkness and uncertainty which hang over our future condition, Revelation, by bringing life and immortality to light, affords the only relief. In the Bible alone we learn the real character of the Supreme Being; his holiness, justice, mercy, and truth; the moral condition of man considered in his relation to Him is clearly pointed out; the doom of impenitent transgressors denounced, and the method of obtaining mercy through the interposition of a divine mediator plainly revealed. There are two considerations which may suffice to evince the indispensable necessity of scriptural knowledge.

1. The Scriptures contain an authentic discovery *of the way of salvation.* They are a revelation of mercy to a lost world; a reply to that most interesting inquiry, *What we must do to be saved.* The distinguishing feature of the gospel system is the economy of redemption, or the gracious provision the Supreme Being has thought fit to make for reconciling the world to himself, by the manifestation in human nature of his own Son. It is this which constitutes it the *Gospel*, by way of eminence, or the glad tidings concerning our Saviour Jesus Christ, on the right reception of which, or its rejection, turns our everlasting weal or wo. It is not from the character of God as our creator, it should be remembered, that the hope of the guilty can arise; the fullest development of his essential perfections could afford no relief in this case, and therefore natural religion, were it capable of being carried to the utmost perfection, can never supersede the necessity of revealed. To inspire confidence, an express communication from Heaven is necessary: since the introduction of sin has produced a peculiarity in our situation and a perplexity in our prospects, which nothing but an express assurance of mercy can remove.

In what manner the blessed and only Potentate may think fit to dispose of a race of apostates is a question on which reason can suggest nothing satisfactory, nothing salutary: a question, in the solution of which, there being no data to proceed upon, wisdom and folly fail alike, and every order of intellect is reduced to a level, for *who hath known the mind of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him?* It is a secret which, had he not been pleased to unfold it, must have

for ever remained in the breast of the Deity. This secret, in infinite mercy, he has condescended to disclose: the silence, not that which John witnessed in the Apocalypse, of half an hour, but that of ages, is broken; the darkness is past, and we behold in the gospel the astonishing spectacle of *God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing to them their trespasses*, and sending forth his ambassadors to *entreat us in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God.* To that strange insensibility with respect to the concerns of a future world which is at once the indication and consequence of the fall must we ascribe the languid attention with which this communication is received; instead of producing, as it ought, transports of gratitude and joy in every breast.

This, however we may be disposed to regard it, is unquestionably the grand peculiarity of the gospel, the exclusive boast and treasure of the Scriptures, and most emphatically *the way of salvation*, not only as it reveals the gracious intentions of God to a sinful world, but as it lays a solid foundation for the *supernatural* duties of faith and repentance. All the discoveries of the gospel bear a most intimate relation to the character and offices of the Saviour; from him they emanate, in him they centre; nor is any thing we learn from the Old or New Testament of saving tendency, further than as a part of the truth as it is *in Jesus.* The neglect of considering revelation in this light is a fruitful source of infidelity. Viewing it in no higher character than a republication of the law of nature, men are first led to doubt the importance, and next the truth of the discoveries it contains; an easy and natural transition, since the question of their importance is so complicated with that of their truth in the Scriptures themselves, that the most refined ingenuity cannot long keep them separate. *It gives the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins, through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death. to guide our feet into the way of peace.* While we contemplate it under this its true character, we view it in its just dimensions, and feel no inclination to extenuate the force of those representations which are expressive of its pre-eminent dignity. There is nothing will be allowed to come into comparison with it, nothing we shall not be ready to sacrifice for a participation of its blessings and the extension of its influence. The veneration we shall feel for the Bible, as the depository of *saving knowledge*, will be totally distinct, not only from what we attach to any other book, but from that admiration its other properties inspire; and the variety and antiquity of its history, the light it affords in various researches, its inimitable touches of nature, together with the sublimity and beauty so copiously poured over its pages, will be deemed subsidiary ornaments, the embellishments of the casket which contains the *pearl of great price.*

2. Scriptural knowledge is of inestimable value on account of its supplying an infallible *rule of life.* To the most untutored mind, the information it affords on this subject is far more full and precise than the highest efforts of reason could attain. In the best moral precepts issuing from human wisdom, there is an incurable defect in that want

of authority which robs them of their power over the conscience; they are obligatory no further than their reason is perceived; a deduction of proofs is necessary, more or less intricate and uncertain, and even when clearest, it is still but the language of man to man, respectable as sage advice, but wanting the force and authority of law. In a well-attested revelation, it is the Judge speaking from the tribunal, the Supreme Legislator promulgating and interpreting his own laws. With what force and conviction do those apostles and prophets address us whose miraculous powers attest them to be the servants of the Most High, the immediate organs of the Deity! As the morality of the gospel is more pure and comprehensive than was ever inculcated before, so the consideration of its divine origination invests it with an energy of which every system not expressly founded upon it is entirely devoid. We turn at our peril from Him who speaketh to us from heaven.

Of an accountable creature, duty is the concern of every moment, since he is every moment pleasing or displeasing God. It is a universal element mingling with every action, and qualifying every disposition and pursuit. The moral quality of conduct, as it serves both to ascertain and to form the character, has consequences in a future world so certain and infallible, that it is represented in Scripture as a seed, no part of which is lost, for *whatsoever* a man soweth, that also shall he reap. That rectitude which the inspired writers usually denominate *holiness* is the health and beauty of the soul, capable of bestowing dignity in the absence of every other accomplishment, while the want of it leaves the possessor of the richest intellectual endowments a painted sepulchre. Hence results the indispensable necessity, to every description of persons, of sound religious instruction, and of an intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures as its genuine source.

It must be confessed, from melancholy experience, that a speculative acquaintance with the rules of duty is too compatible with the violation of its dictates, and that it is possible for the convictions of conscience to be habitually overpowered by the corrupt suggestions of appetite. To see distinctly the right way, and to pursue it, are not precisely the same thing. Still nothing in the order of means promises so much success as the diligent inculcation of revealed truth. He who is acquainted with the *terrors of the Lord* cannot live in the neglect of God and religion with present, any more than with future impunity; the path of disobedience is obstructed if not rendered impassable; and wherever he turns his eyes he beholds the sword of divine justice stretched out to intercept his passage. Guilt will be appalled, conscience alarmed, and the fruits of unlawful gratification imbittered to his taste.

It is surely desirable to place as many obstacles as possible in the path of ruin: to take care that the image of death shall meet the offender at every turn; that he shall not be able to persist without treading upon briers and scorpions, without forcing his way through obstructions more formidable than he can expect to meet with in a contrary course. If you can enlist the nobler part of his nature under the banners of virtue, set him at war with himself, and subject him to

the necessity should he persevere, of stifling and overcoming whatever is most characteristic of a reasonable creature, you have done what will probably not be unproductive of advantage. If he be at the same time reminded, by his acquaintance with the word of God, of a better state of mind being attainable, a better destiny reserved, provided they are willing and obedient, for the children of men, there is room to hope that, *wearied*, to speak in the language of the prophet, *in the greatness of his way*, he will bethink himself of the true refuge, and implore the spirit of grace to aid his weakness and subdue his corruptions. Sound religious instruction is a perpetual counterpoise to the force of depravity. *The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.*

While we insist on the absolute necessity of an acquaintance with the word of God, we are equally convinced it is but an instrument, which, like every other, requires a hand to wield it; and that, important as it is in the order of means, the spirit of Christ only can make it effectual, which ought therefore to be earnestly and incessantly implored for that purpose. *Open mine eyes*, saith the Psalmist, *and I shall behold wonderful things out of thy law.* We trust it will be your care who have the conduct of the school we are recommending to the patronage of this audience to impress on these children a deep conviction of their radical corruption, and of the necessity of the agency of the Spirit to render the knowledge they acquire practical and experimental. *In the morning sow your seed, in the evening withhold not your hand; but remember that neither he that soweth, nor he that watereth, is any thing; it is God that giveth the increase.* Be not satisfied with making them read a lesson or repeat a prayer. By every thing tender and solemn in religion, by a due admixture of the awful considerations drawn from the prospect of death and judgment, with others of a more pleasing nature, aim to fix serious impressions on their hearts. Aim to produce a religious concern, carefully watch its progress, and endeavour to conduct it to a prosperous issue. Lead them to the footstool of the Saviour; teach them to rely, as guilty creatures, on his merits alone, and to commit their eternal interests entirely into his hands. Let the salvation of these children be the object to which every word of your instructions, every exertion of your authority is directed. Despise the profane clamour which would deter you from attempting to render them serious, from an apprehension of its making them melancholy, not doubting for a moment that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and that the path to true happiness lies through purity, humility, and devotion. Meditate the worth of souls: meditate deeply the lessons the Scriptures afford on their inconceivable value and eternal duration. While the philosopher wearies himself with endless speculations on their physical properties and nature, while the politician only contemplates the social arrangements of mankind and the shifting forms of policy, fix *your* attention on the individual importance of man as the creature of God and a candidate for

immortality. Let it be your highest ambition to train up these children for an unchanging condition of being. Spare no pains to recover them to the image of God; render familiar to their minds, in all its extent, the various branches of that *holiness* without which *none shall see the Lord.* Inculcate the obligation, and endeavour to inspire the love of that rectitude, that eternal rectitude, which was with God before time began, was imbodied in the person of his Son, and in its lower communications will survive every sublunary change, emerge in the dissolution of all things, and be impressed, in refulgent characters, on the new heavens and the new earth, *in which dwelleth righteousness.* Pray often with them and for them, and remind them of the inconceivable advantages attached to that exercise. Accustom them to a punctual and reverential attendance at the house of God: insist on the sanctification of the Sabbath, by such a disposal of time as is suitable to a day of rest and devotion. Survey them with a vigilant and tender eye, checking every appearance of an evil and depraved disposition the moment it springs up, and encouraging the dawn of piety and virtue. By thus *training them up in the way they should go*, you may reasonably hope that, *when old, they will not depart from it.*

We congratulate the nation on the extent of the efforts employed and the means set on foot for the improvement of the lower classes, and especially the children of the poor, in moral and religious knowledge, from which we hope much good will accrue, not only to the parties concerned but to the kingdom at large. These are the likeliest, or rather the only expedients that can be adopted for forming a sound and virtuous populace; and if there be any truth in the figure by which society is compared to a pyramid, it is on them its stability chiefly depends: the elaborate ornament at the top will be a wretched compensation for the want of solidity in the lower parts of the structure. These are not the times in which it is safe for a nation to repose on the lap of ignorance. If there ever were a season when public tranquillity was ensured by the absence of knowledge, that season is past. The convulsed state of the world will not permit unthinking stupidity to sleep without being appalled by phantoms and shaken by terrors to which reason, which defines her objects and limits her apprehensions by the reality of things, is a stranger. Every thing in the condition of mankind announces the approach of some great crisis, for which nothing can prepare us but the diffusion of knowledge, probity, and the fear of the Lord. While the world is impelled with such violence in opposite directions; while a spirit of giddiness and revolt is shed upon the nations, and the seeds of mutation are so thickly sown, the improvement of the mass of the people will be our grand security; in the neglect of which, the politeness, the refinement, and the knowledge accumulated in the higher orders, weak and unprotected, will be exposed to imminent danger, and perish like a garland in the grasp of popular fury. *Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation; the fear of the Lord is his treasure.*

ON THE DISCOURAGEMENTS AND SUPPORTS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER:

A DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED TO

THE REV. JAMES ROBERTSON,

AT HIS ORDINATION OVER THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH AT STRETTON, WARWICKSHIRE.

[PUBLISHED IN 1812.]

WITH SENTIMENTS OF THE HIGHEST ESTEEM,

THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT HIS REQUEST,

IS INSCRIBED TO

THE REV. JAMES ROBERTSON,

BY HIS

AFFECTIONATE FRIEND

AND BROTHER,

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

The following discourse would sooner have made its appearance, but for circumstances in which the public are too little interested to render it necessary or proper for me to explain: nor should I have adverted to the time of its publication, did it not seem strange that, having been preached on a public occasion, it should be committed to the press more than a twelvemonth after the delivery.

With respect to the sermon itself, the author begs leave to bespeak the indulgence of his readers for introducing sentiments with which they must be perfectly familiar, requesting them to recollect that, on practical subjects, the most common thoughts are usually the most important, and that originality is the last quality we seek for in advice. If it have any tendency to do good beyond the occasion of its delivery, by reminding my highly-esteemed brethren in the ministry of the duties and obligation attached to their sacred function, the end proposed will be answered. The worthy person to whom it was addressed gave a specimen of his liberality, in engaging me to take so leading a part in his ordination, when our difference of sentiment on the subject of baptism was well known; a subject which has, unhappily, been a frequent occasion of alienating the minds of Christians from each other. How much is it to be lamented, that the Christian world should be so violently agitated by disputes, and divided into factions, on points which, it is allowed, in whatever way they are decided, do not enter into the essentials of Christianity! When will the time arrive when the disciples of Christ shall cordially join hand and heart with all who *hold the head*, and no other terms of communion be insisted upon in any church but what are necessary to constitute a real Christian? The departure from a principle so directly resulting from the genius of Christianity, and so evidently inculcated and implied in the sacred Scriptures, has, in my apprehension, been productive of infinite mischief; nor is there room to anticipate the period of the universal diffusion and triumph of the Christian religion, but in consequence of its being completely renounced and abandoned.

What can be more repugnant to the beautiful idea which our Saviour gives us of his church, as *one fold under one shepherd*, than the present aspect of Christendom, split into separate and hostile communions frowning defiance on each other, where each erects itself upon *party principles*, and selects its respective watchword of contention, as

though the epithet of militant, when applied to the church, were designed to announce, not a state of conflict with the powers of darkness, but of irreconcilable intestine warfare and opposition. But it is necessary to quit a subject which, though painfully interesting, would necessarily lead to reflections inconsistent with the limits of this preface.

It may be more to the purpose to remark, that the substance of the following discourse was delivered in London, at the anniversary of an academical institution, recently established in the neighbourhood of that metropolis, for educating young men for the ministry in the Baptist denomination. The institution to which we refer is under the immediate superintendence of the Rev. William Newman. I cannot let the present occasion pass, of earnestly and respectfully recommending this infant seminary to the patronage of the religious public. There was a time, we are aware, when doubts were entertained, in some serious minds, of the eligibility of training young men for the ministry, by a preparatory course of study. These scruples, we believe, have long since subsided, and a conviction felt by intelligent men of all denominations of the expedience, if not the necessity, of instructing candidates for the ministry in the principles of science and literature. Learning is no longer dreaded as the enemy of piety; nor is it supposed that the orthodoxy of a public teacher of religion derives any security from his professed ignorance on every other subject. Along with this revolution in the sentiments of a certain class of Christians, circumstances have arisen, connected with the more general diffusion of knowledge and the state of society, which render a higher degree of mental cultivation than was heretofore needed indispensably requisite. The Baptist denomination, in common with other Christians, have not failed to advert to this urgent and increasing demand for cultivated talent in their ministers, although they have long had occasion to lament the scantiness and inadequacy of their means of supplying it. To the Bristol academy, the only seminary they possessed till within these few years, they feel the highest obligations, for supplying them with a succession of able and faithful pastors, who have done honour to their churches: and few things would give the patrons and founders of the seminary for which I am pleading more concern, than the suspicion of entertaining views unfavourable to that academy. They respect its claim of seniority; they revere the character of its excellent president; they contemplate, with the highest satisfaction, the beneficial result of its operations, conspicuous in most parts of the kingdom: but they are too well acquainted with the disinterested motives of its friends and benefactors to suspect them of wishing to monopolize the education of ministers connected with the denomination. They feel as little jealousy of the seminary recently established in Yorkshire, which has already produced good fruits, under the culture and superintendence of the excellent Mr. Steadman. Convinced, however, of there being still occasion for an enlargement of the means of instruction, and having, by the munificence of a generous individual, been presented with a house and premises well adapted to academical

purposes, they could feel no hesitation in accepting so noble a gift, or in seconding the pious and benevolent design of the founder. The institution is yet in its infancy, and subsists on a small scale. They look to the smiles of Heaven, and to the liberality of a Christian public, and especially to the piety and opulence of the professors of religion in the metropolis, who have never been wanting in the zealous support of institutions tending to promote the glory of God and the best interest of mankind, for such an enlargement of their funds and resources as, seconded by the efforts of its worthy tutor, shall render it a permanent and extensive blessing.

Leicester *December* 31, 1811.

A DISCOURSE.

2 Corinthians iv. 1.

Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not.

As you have requested me to address you upon the present occasion, I am persuaded you will deem no apology necessary for the use of that freedom which the nature of the service to which you have invited me demands, combined with those sentiments of high esteem which your character will always inspire. Having, with the accustomed solemnities, been invested with the pastoral office over this church, you will permit me to remind you of the discouragements on the one hand, and the supports on the other, which you may reasonably look for in your ministerial warfare, as far as they are naturally suggested to us by the passage of Scripture selected for the basis of our present discourse.

If it is necessary for the private Christian, before he assumes a religious profession, to count the cost; to the minister it cannot be less so, that he may not be surprised by unexpected trials, nor dismayed at the encounter of difficulties for which he has made no preparation. A just estimate of the nature and magnitude is an important qualification for the proper discharge of whatever function we are called to exert. As you are neither a novice in the ministry, nor have failed to reflect deeply on the consequences of your present engagements, you will not suspect me of attempting, by the hints which may be suggested, to give you information, but merely *to stir up your pure mind by way of remembrance.*

I. Let me request your attention to the sources of *discouragement* connected with the office you have undertaken.

1. They are such as arise, in part, from the nature of the office itself, which is appointed for the purpose of converting souls to God, and conducting them in the path to eternal life. To you, in common with other Christian pastors, is committed the ministry of reconciliation, the office of promulgating that system of truth which is designed to renew the world and sanctify the church. Under the highest authority you are enjoined to use your utmost efforts *to open blind eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God*

The bare mention of such an employment is enough to convince us the difficulties attending it are of no ordinary magnitude, and to make us exclaim with an apostle, *Who is sufficient for these things?*

The minds of men are naturally indisposed to the reception of divine truth. The truths of the gospel are not merely of a speculative nature, which need only to be stated with their proper evidence in order to ensure their success: there are in the mind latent prejudices against which they strongly militate, and which, when excited, naturally produce opposition. Mankind are disposed to think well of themselves, to view their virtues through a magnifying medium, and to cast their deficiencies and vices into the shade. Dissatisfied, as they often are, with their outward condition, they have yet little or no conviction of their spiritual wants; but with respect to these are ready to imagine, with the Laodiceans, that they *are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing*. Hence it is with extreme difficulty they are brought to acquiesce in the humiliating representations made by the oracles of God of their native guilt and misery. They will readily confess they are not perfectly innocent or faultless; they have their imperfections as well as others, but they are far from believing that they are actually under the wrath and displeasure of the Almighty. They feel, on the whole, satisfied with themselves, and, by setting their supposed good qualities and actions against their bad ones, contrive to adjust their account in such a manner as leaves a considerable balance in their favour. On the mercy of God they feel no objection to profess their reliance; deeming it more decent, and even more safe, than to challenge his justice; but it is easy to perceive that the mercy of which they speak is of such a nature, that they would look upon it as an absurdity to suppose it could be withheld. In short, they are the whole who need no physician.

The gospel presupposes a charge of guilt; it assumes, as an indubitable fact, the universal apostacy of our race, and its consequent liability to perish under the stroke of the divine anger; nor can you acquit yourself of the imputation of handling the word of God deceitfully, if, from false delicacy or mistaken tenderness, you neglect the frequent inculcation of this momentous truth. You will find it, however, no easy matter to fasten the charge on the conscience; which, when it seems to be admitted, will often amount to nothing more than a vague and general acknowledgment, which leaves the heart quite unaffected. To convince effectually is, indeed, the work of a superior agent.

The very attempt to produce that humiliating sense of unworthiness and weakness which is essential to a due reception of the gospel will frequently excite disgust, should it terminate in no worse consequences. You will be reproached as the messenger of evil tidings, and suspected of taking a pleasure in overwhelming the soul with dark and melancholy forebodings. By a part of your hearers you will possibly be regarded as an unnatural character, and as having in your religion a tincture of what is savage and inhuman; in consequence of which, they who refuse to profit by your admonitions will be apt to apply to

you the language of the king of Israel, *I hate him, for he always prophesieth evil of me, and not good.* Of the common apostacy, one of the most distinguishing features is, a stupefaction and insensibility in relation to whatever is of a spiritual nature, together with a levity and carelessness which it requires the utmost effort of the Christian ministry to dispel.

If you should be successful in awakening a salutary concern in the breasts of your hearers, and exciting them to inquire what they must do to be saved, fresh difficulties await you. The enemy will leave no artifice untried to divert it, and to wear it off by such a succession of cares and vanities, that as much attention and address will be requisite to maintain it till it issues in a saving effect, as to produce it at first. There are many who, after appearing for a time earnestly engaged in the pursuit of salvation, have, in consequence of stifling convictions, become more callous and insensible than ever, as iron is hardened in the fire. The grand scope of the Christian ministry is to bring men home to Christ; but ere they arrive thither, there are numerous by-paths into which those who are awakened are in danger of diverting, and of finding a delusive repose, without coming as humble penitents to the foot of the cross. They are equally in danger of catching at premature consolation, and of sinking into listless despondency. *Withhold thy throat from thirst*, said the prophet Jeremiah, *and thy foot from being unshod; but thou saidst, there is no hope, for I have loved strangers, and after them I must go.* In the pursuit of eternal good, the heart is extremely inconstant and irresolute; easily prevailed on, when the peace it is in quest of is delayed, to desist from further seeking. During the first serious impressions, the light which unveils futurity often shines with too feeble a ray to produce that perfect and plenary conviction which permits the mind no longer to vacillate; and the fascination of sensible objects eclipses the powers of the world to come. Nor is there less to be apprehended from any other quarter. The conscience, roused to a just sense of the danger to which the sinner is exposed by his violation of the laws of God, is apt to derive consolation from this very uneasiness; by which means it is possible that the alarm, which is chiefly valuable on account of its tendency to produce a consent to the overtures of the gospel, may ultimately lull the mind into a deceitful repose. The number, we fear, is not small of those who, though they have never experienced a saving change, are yet under no apprehensions respecting their state, merely because they can remember the time when they felt poignant convictions. Mistaking what are usually the preliminary steps to conversion for conversion itself, they deduce from their former apprehensions an antidote against present fears, and from past prognostics of danger an omen of their future safety. With persons of this description the flashes of a superficial joy, arising from a presumption of being already pardoned, accompanied with some slight and transien relishes of the word of God, are substituted for that new birth, and that lively trust in the Redeemer, to which the promise of salvation inseparably belongs. Such were those who received the seed into

stony ground, and who, having heard the word of God, *anon with joy received it, but having no depth of earth, it soon withered away.* Others endeavour to sooth the anguish of their minds by a punctual performance of certain religious exercises, and a partial reformation of conduct; in consequence of which they sink into mere formalists; and confounding the instruments of religion with the end, their apparent melioration of character diverts their attention from their real wants, and, by making them insensible of the extent of their malady, obstructs their cure. Instead of imploring the assistance of the great Physician, and implicitly complying with his prescriptions, they have recourse to palliatives, which assuage the anguish and the smart, without reaching the seat or touching the core of the disorder.

Were the change which the gospel proposes to effect less fundamental and extensive than it is, we might the more easily flatter ourselves with being able to carry its designs into execution. Did it aim merely to polish the exterior, to tame the wildness and prune the luxuriance of nature without the implanting of a new principle, the undertaking would be less arduous. But its scope is much higher; it proposes, not merely to reform, but to renew; not so much to repair the moral edifice as to build it afresh; not merely, by the remonstrances of reason and the dictates of prudence, to engage men to lay a restraint upon their vices, but, by the inspiration of truth, to become new creatures. The effects of the gospel on the heart are compared, by the prophet, to the planting of a wilderness, where what was barrenness and desolation before is replenished with new productions. *I will plant in the wilderness the cedar-tree, the shittah-tree, and the myrtle-tree; I will set in the desert the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box-tree together, that they may know, and consider, and understand that the hand of the Lord hath done this.* Although the change is frequently slow, and the Spirit of God, in effecting it, may proceed by imperceptible steps and gentle insinuations, the issue is invariably the same; nor can any representation do justice to its dignity. How great the skill requisite in those who are to be the instruments of producing it!

To arrest the attention of the careless, to subdue the pride and soften the obduracy of the human heart, so that it shall stoop to the authority of an unseen Saviour, is a task which surpasses the utmost efforts of human ability, unaided by a superior power. In attempting to realize the design of the Christian ministry, we are proposing to call the attention of men from the things which are seen and temporal to things unseen and eternal; to conduct them from a life of sense to a life of faith; to subdue, or weaken at least, the influence of a world, which, being always present, is incessantly appealing to the senses, and soliciting the heart, in favour of a state whose very existence is ascertained only by testimony. We call upon them to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, to deny the strongest and most inveterate propensities, and to renounce the enjoyments which they have tasted and felt for the sake of a happiness to which they have no relish. We must charge *them*, as they value their salvation, not to love the world, who have been accustomed to make it the sole object

of their attachment, and to return to their allegiance to that almighty and invisible Ruler from whom they have deeply revolted. We present to them, it is true, *a feast of fat things, of wine on the lees well refined;* we invite them to entertainments more ample and exquisite than, but for the gospel, it had entered into the heart of man to conceive; but we address our invitations to minds fatally indisposed, alienated from the life of God, with little sense of the value of his favour, and no delight in his converse. The souls we address, though originally formed for these enjoyments, and utterly incapable of being happy without them, have lost, through the fall, that right taste and apprehension of things which is requisite for the due appreciation of these blessings; and, like Ezekiel, we prophesy to dry bones in the valley of Vision, which will never live but under the visitation of that breath which bloweth where it listeth. This indisposition to the things of God, so radical and incurable by human power, as it has been a frequent source of discouragement to the faithful minister, so it would prove an invincible obstacle to success, did that success depend upon human agency.

2. To these difficulties, which arise from the nature of the work, abstractedly considered, must be added those which are modified by a variety of circumstances, and which result from that diversity of temper, character, and situation which prevails in our auditory. To the several classes of which it consists, it is necessary *rightly to divide the word of truth, and give to every one his portion of meat in due season.* The epidemic malady of our nature assumes so many shapes, and appears under such a variety of symptoms, that these may be considered as so many distinct diseases, which demand a proportionate variety in the method of treatment; nor will the same prescription suit all cases. A different set of truths, a different mode of address is requisite to rouse the careless, to beat down the arrogance of a self-justifying spirit from what is necessary to comfort the humble and contrite in heart; nor is it easy to say which we should most anxiously guard against, the infusion of a false peace, or inflaming the wounds which we ought to heal. A loose and indiscriminate manner of applying the promises and threatenings of the gospel is ill-judged and pernicious; it is not possible to conceive a more effectual method of depriving the sword of the Spirit of its edge, than adopting that lax generality of representation which leaves its hearer nothing to apply, presents no incentive to self-examination, and, besides its utter inefficiency, disgusts by the ignorance of human nature, or the disregard to its best interests, it infallibly betrays. Without descending to such a minute specification of circumstances as shall make our addresses personal, they ought unquestionably to be characteristic, that the conscience of the audience may feel the hand of the preacher searching it, and every individual know where to class himself. The preacher who aims at doing good will endeavour, above all things, to insulate his hearers, to place each of them apart, and render it impossible for him to escape by losing himself in the crowd. At the day of judgment, the attention excited by the surrounding scene, the strange aspect

of nature, the dissolution of the elements, and the last trump will have no other effect than to cause the reflections of the sinner to return with a more overwhelming tide on his own character, his sentence, his unchanging destiny; and amid the innumerable millions who surround him, he will *mourn apart*. It is thus the Christian minister should endeavour to prepare the tribunal of conscience, and turn the eyes of every one of his hearers on himself.

To men of different casts and complexions, it is obvious, a corresponding difference in the selection of topics and the method of appeal is requisite. Some are only capable of digesting the first principles of religion, on whom it is necessary often to inculcate the same lessons with the reiteration of parental solicitude: there are others of a wider grasp of comprehension, who must be indulged with an ampler variety, and to whom views of religion less obvious, less obtrusive, and demanding a more vigorous exercise of the understanding, are peculiarly adapted. Some are accustomed to contemplate every subject in a light so cool and argumentative, that they are not easily impressed with any thing which is not presented in the garb of reasoning; nor apt, though firm believers in revelation, to be strongly moved by naked assertions even from that quarter. There are others of a softer temperament who are more easily won by tender strokes of pathos. Minds of an obdurate make, and which have been rendered callous by long habits of vice, must be appalled and subdued by the terrors of the Lord; while others are capable of being *drawn with the cords of love, and with the bands of a man. Some we must save with fear, plucking them out of the fire; on others we must have compassion, making a difference.* You will recollect that he who spake as never man spake, mild, gentle, insinuating in his addresses to the multitude, reserved the thunder of his denunciations for sanctimonious hypocrites. In this part of our ministerial function we shall do well to imitate St. Paul, who became "all things to all men, that he might win some;" combining, in his efforts for the salvation of souls, the utmost simplicity of intention with the utmost versatility of address.

May I be permitted to remark, though it seem a digression, that in the mode of conducting our public ministrations, we are, perhaps, too formal and mechanical; that in the distribution of the matter of our sermons we indulge too little variety, and, exposing our plan in all its parts, abate the edge of curiosity by enabling the hearer to anticipate what we intend to advance. Why should that force which surprise gives to every emotion derived from just and affecting sentiments be banished from the pulpit, when it is found of such moment in every other kind of public address? I cannot but imagine the first preachers of the gospel appeared before their audience with a more free and unfettered air than is consistent with the narrow trammels to which, in these latter ages, discourses from the pulpit are confined. The sublime emotions with which they were fraught would have rendered them impatient of such restrictions; nor could they suffer the impetuous stream of argument, expostulation, and pathos to be weakened, by diverting it into the artificial reservoirs prepared in the heads and

particulars of a modern sermon. Method, we are aware, is an essential ingredient in every discourse designed for the instruction of mankind, but it ought never to force itself on the attention as an object apart; never appear to be an end, instead of an instrument; or beget a suspicion of the sentiments being introduced for the sake of the method not the method for the sentiments. Let the experiment be tried on some of the best specimens of ancient eloquence; let an oration of Cicero or Demosthenes be stretched upon a Procrustes' bed of this sort, and, if I am not greatly mistaken, the flame and enthusiasm which have excited admiration in all ages will instantly evaporate; yet no one perceives a want of method in these immortal compositions, nor can any thing be conceived more remote from incoherent rhapsody.

To return to the subject: whatever the mode of address, or whatever the choice of topics, there are two qualities inseparable from religious instruction,—these are *seriousness* and *affection*. In the most awful denunciations of the divine displeasure, an air of unaffected tenderness should be preserved, that while with unsparing fidelity we declare the whole counsel of God, it may appear we are actuated by a genuine spirit of compassion. A hard and unfeeling manner of denouncing the threatenings of the word of God is not only barbarous and inhuman, but calculated, by inspiring disgust, to rob them of all their efficacy. If the awful part of our message, which may be styled the burden of the Lord, ever fall with due weight on our hearers, it will be when it is delivered with a trembling hand and faltering lips; and we may then expect them to realize its solemn import when they perceive that we ourselves are ready to sink under it. "Of whom I have told you before," said St. Paul, "and now tell you *weeping*, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." What force does that affecting declaration derive from these tears! An affectionate manner insinuates itself into the heart, renders it soft and pliable, and disposes it to imbibe the sentiments and follow the impulse of the speaker. Whoever has attended to the effect of addresses from the pulpit must have perceived how much of their impression depends upon this quality, which gives to sentiments comparatively trite a power over the mind beyond what the most striking and original conceptions possess without it.

Near akin to this, and not inferior in importance, is the second quality we mentioned, *seriousness*. It is scarcely necessary to remark, how offensive and unnatural is every violation of it in a religious discourse, which is, however, of wider extent than is generally imagined, including not merely jesting, buffoonery, and undisguised levity of every sort, but also whatsoever, in composition or manner, is inconsistent with the supposition of the speaker being deeply in earnest; such as sparkling ornaments, far-fetched images, and that exuberance of flowers which seems evidently designed to gratify the fancy rather than to touch the heart. When St. Paul recommends to Timothy that *sound speech which cannot be condemned*, it is probable he refers as much to the propriety of the vehicle as to the purity of the instruction. There

is, permit me to remind you, a sober dignity both of language and of sentiment suited to the representations of religion in all its variety of topics, from which the inspired writers never depart, and which it will be our wisdom to imitate. In describing the pleasures of devotion, or the joys of heaven, there is nothing weak, sickly, or effeminate: a chaste severity pervades their delineations, and whatever they say appears to emanate from a serious mind, accustomed to the contemplation of great objects without ever sinking under them from imbecility, or attempting to supply a deficiency of interest by puerile exaggerations and feeble ornaments. The exquisite propriety of their representations is chiefly to be ascribed to their habitual seriousness; and the latter to their seeing things as they are.

3. Having touched on the principal difficulties attending the *public* exercise of the ministry, it may be expected something will be said on its more private functions. To affirm it to be the duty of a pastor to visit his people *often* is, perhaps, affirming too much; the more frequently he converses with them, however, provided his conversation be properly conducted, the more will his person be endeared and his ministry acceptable. The seasonable introduction of religious topics is often of such admirable use, that there are few qualities more enviable than the talent of "teaching from house to house;" though the modern state of manners, I am aware, has rendered this branch of the pastoral office much more difficult than in former times. In a country village, where there is more simplicity, less dissipation, and less hurry of business than in large towns, prudent exertions of this kind may be considered as eminently proper and beneficial. The extent to which they should be carried must be determined by circumstances, without attempting to prescribe any other rule than this, that the conversation of a Christian minister should be always such as is adapted to strengthen, not impair, the impression of his public instructions. Though it is not necessary nor expedient for him to be always conversing on the subject of religion, his conversation should invariably have a religious tendency; that whatever excursions he indulges, the return to serious topics may be easy and natural. The whole cast of his character should be such as is adapted to give weight to the exercise of his ministerial functions. On the peculiar force with which the obligations of virtue attach to a Christian teacher, the purity and correctness of your own conduct, while it would imbolden me to speak with the greater freedom, make it less necessary for me to insist. You are aware that moral delinquency in *him* produces a sensation as when an armour-bearer fainteth; that he can neither stand nor fall by himself; and that it is impossible for him to deviate essentially from the path of rectitude without incurring the guilt and infamy of Jeroboam, who is never mentioned but to be stigmatized as he *who taught Israel to sin. Be thou an ensample to the flock in faith, in purity, in conversation, in doctrine, in charity.* Instead of satisfying ourselves in the acquisition of virtue with the attainments of a learner, we must aspire to the perfection of a master, and give to our conduct the correctness of a pattern. We are called to such a conquest over

the world, and such an exhibition of the spirit of Christ, as shall not merely exempt us from censure, but excite to emulation. *Ye are the salt of the earth, ye are the light of the world*, said our Saviour to his disciples, whom he was about to send forth in the character of public teachers. As persons to whom the conduct of souls is committed, we cannot make a wrong step without endangering the interests of others; so that if we neglect to take our soundings and inspect our chart, ours is the misconduct of the pilot, who is denied the privilege of perishing alone. The immoral conduct of a Christian minister is little less than a public triumph over the religion he inculcates: and when we recollect the frailty of our nature, the snares to which we are exposed, and the wiles of our adversary, who will proportion his efforts to the advantages resulting from his success, we must be aware how much the necessity of maintaining an exemplary conduct adds to the difficulty of the ministerial function.

With the utmost propriety of conduct, and the greatest skill exerted in your work, we dare not flatter you with the prospect of unmingled success. Under the most judicious method of treatment, the maladies of some will prove incurable, and they will perish under your hand. While to some the gospel is a *savour of life unto life*, to others it will prove *the savour of death unto death;* and in the course of your labours you will meet with frequent disappointments where you have formed the most sanguine expectations. *Some who did run well will afterward be hindered; and of others, who have clean escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, being afterward entangled therein, the latter end will be worse than the beginning.* Many a Demas, it is probable, will forsake you, *having loved this present world;* and by many of your hearers, who now evince the most zealous attachment, you may hereafter be considered as an enemy, because you tell them the truth. In certain instances, your ministry will be attended with consequences which you cannot contemplate without deep concern; for the sword of the spirit is an awful weapon, which will exert, where it fails to inflict a salutary wound, its *destructive* edge. Against those of your hearers who reject your message, though now an ambassador of peace, and often a weeping suppliant at their feet, you will ere long appear a swift witness before God, and be compelled, by your voice, to exasperate the accents of vengeance, and augment the vials of wrath. *You are set for the rising and falling of many in Israel.*

II. But it is time to turn to a more pleasing part of our subject, and to remind you of some of the supports by which these sources of discouragement are balanced.

1. The office you have undertaken is of divine institution. The unhappy disputes which have prevailed in the church respecting the proper channels for conveying, and the legitimate mode of vesting it, are so far from weakening or perplexing the evidence of this truth, that they may be considered as so many concurrent suffrages in its favour; since it is allowed on all hands that the Christian ministry

is an ordinance of God; an expedient for the improvement of mankind, of his devising, and supported by his authority. But of that wisdom which pervades the works of God, the church is the principal scene; *to the intent*, saith the apostle, *that to principalities and powers might be made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.* Hence we may be certain that so leading a branch of its constitution as that under our consideration cannot fail of being adapted in the best possible manner to promote the interest of religion; nor is it difficult to perceive, that if men are to be wrought upon by reason and persuasion, the setting apart an order for the express purpose of instructing them in the concerns of salvation must have a beneficial tendency; an order, be it remembered, not appointed like the priests of pagan antiquity for the performance of ceremonies, but for the inculcation of truth; not to conduct the pomp of lustrations and sacrifices, but to *watch for souls as those that must give an account.* Nothing similar to this was known in the heathen religions; it is peculiar to Christianity, and evincing the simple wisdom of its author, is as original in its conception as it is admirable in its effects. Its simplicity, its distance from whatever is dazzling in the eyes of mankind, is one of its highest recommendations; for the Christian minister is beautifully compared to a fisherman, who would only be embarrassed by those instruments and appendages which belong to more splendid, but less useful employments.

2. Another consideration calculated to afford us encouragement is, that the materials of our work are ready furnished to our hand, and, at the same time, of a nature admirably adapted to our purpose. Our office is that of stewards of the mysteries of the kingdom; our duty, faithfully to dispense the stores which superior wisdom and opulence have provided. It is not necessary for us to stretch our invention in the discovery of topics and arguments fitted to move the mind and impel it in a right direction, which, if we may judge from past experience, would be a most unpromising undertaking. A doctrine, full, pure, perfect, to which nothing can be added without debasing its spirit, nothing taken away without impairing its proportions, is committed to our trust, to be retained and preserved just as we have received it, and delivered to our hearers in all its primitive simplicity. Like the works of nature, while it exhibits at first view an impress of its author, in the unequivocal character it bears of purity and majesty, it improves on a closer examination; and the more deeply it is investigated the more the wisdom of the contrivance, in its exquisite adaptation to the state and condition of mankind, becomes conspicuous. As the discovery of a way of salvation for a fallen race, of the method by which a guilty and degenerate creature may recover the image and favour of his Maker, which we must ever remember is its most essential characteristic, what is wanting to its perfection? what information or assurance beyond what it contains, calculated to awe, enlighten, convince, and encourage? The facts it exhibits, supported by clear and indubitable testimony, are more extraordinary than ever entered the mind of man in its widest excursions, combining all the sobriety of

truth with more than the grandeur of fiction; and the doctrines connected with these facts, by the easiest and most natural inference, are of infinite moment. To a serious mind, the truths of the Christian religion appear with such an air of unaffected greatness, that in comparison of these all other speculations and reasonings seem like the amusements of childhood. When the Deity, the incarnation, the atonement, the resurrection of the Son of God, the sanctification of the church, and the prospects of glory have engaged our contemplation, we feel, in turning our attention to other objects, a strange descent, and perceive, with the certainty of demonstration, that as the earth is too narrow for the full development of these mysteries, they are destined by their consequences and effects to impregnate an eternal duration. We are not at all surprised at finding the ancient prophets searched into these mysteries with great but unsuccessful diligence, that the angels desire to look into them, or that the apostles were lost in the contemplation of those riches which they proclaimed and imparted. Are you desirous of fixing the attention of your hearers strongly on their everlasting concerns? No peculiar refinement of thought, no subtlety of reasoning, much less the pompous exaggerations of secular eloquence are wanted for that purpose; you have only to imbibe deeply the mind of Christ, to let his doctrine enlighten, his love inspire your heart, and your situation, in comparison of other speakers, will resemble that of the angel of the Apocalypse, who was seen standing in the sun. Draw your instructions immediately from the Bible; the more immediately they are derived from the source, and the less they are tinctured with human distinctions and refinements, the more salutary, and the more efficacious. Let them be taken fresh from the spring. *You*, I am persuaded, will not satisfy yourself with the study of Christianity in narrow, jejune abridgments and systems, but contemplate it in its utmost extent, as it subsists in the sacred oracles; and in investigating these you will permit your reason and conscience an operation as free and unfettered as if none had examined them before. The neglect of this produces, too often, an artificial scarcity, where some of the choicest provisions of the household are exploded or overlooked.

When we inculcate, with so much earnestness, an attention to the mind of Christ as exhibited in the Scriptures, let us not be understood to exclude his precepts, or to countenance, for a moment, the too frequent neglect of Christian morality. While you delight in displaying the riches of divine grace, conspicuous in the work of redemption, as the grand motive to love and trust in the Redeemer, you will not forget frequently to admonish your hearers that he only *loveth him who keepeth his sayings;* the illustration of which, in their bearings upon the different relations and circumstances of life, will form, if you follow the apostolic example, a most important branch of your ministry. Not content with committing the obligation of morality to the arbitration of feeling, much less with faintly hinting at it, as an obvious inference from orthodox doctrine, you will illustrate its principles with an energy, a copiousness, a fulness of detail proportioned to its acknowledged

importance. You will not be silent on the precepts, from an apprehension of infringing on the freedom of the gospel, nor sink the character of the legislator in that of the Saviour of the church. A morality, more elevated and pure than is to be met with in the pages of Seneca or Epictetus, will breathe through your sermons, founded on a basis which every understanding can comprehend, and enforced by sanctions which nothing but the utmost stupidity can despise; a morality of which the love of God and a devoted attachment to the Redeemer are the plastic soul, which, pervading every limb and expressing itself in every lineament of the new creature, gives it a beauty all its own. As it is the genuine fruit of just and affecting views of divine truth, you will never sever it from its parent stock, nor indulge the fruitless hope of leading men to holiness, without strongly imbuing them with the spirit of the gospel. Truth and holiness are in the Christian system so intimately allied, that the warm and faithful inculcation of the one lays the only foundation for the other. For the *illustration* of particular branches of morals, we may consult pagan writers on ethics with advantage; but in search of *principles*, it is at our peril that we desert the school of Christ: since "we are complete in Him," and all the moral excellence to which we can aspire is but Christianity imbodied; or, if we may be allowed to change the figure, the impress of the gospel upon the heart. The perfection of the Christian system, considered as the instrument of renovating the human mind, is the second consideration.

3. The third consideration to which I would direct your attention is that of its being the dispensation of the Spirit. To this the apostle immediately refers in the context, where he is contrasting the Christian with the Jewish institute. *Who hath also made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death written and engraven in stones was glorious, how shall not the ministration of the spirit be more glorious?* From this circumstance he infers the superior dignity of the Christian ministry. The miraculous gifts intended for a sign to unbelievers, and to aid the gospel during its first struggle with the powers of pagan darkness, have long since ceased with the exigency that called them forth; but the renewing and sanctifying agency of the spirit remains, and will continue to the end of time; the express declaration of our Saviour not admitting a doubt of its perpetuity. *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him, but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.* To the world, who, in their unrenewed state, are unsusceptible of his sanctifying impress, he is promised in the preparatory form of a spirit of conviction; to believers, he is promised as an indwelling principle, an ever-present Deity, who consecrates the hearts of the faithful to be his perpetual abode. Hence the ministers of Christ are not dependent for success on the force of moral suasion; not merely the teachers of an external religion, including truths the most momentous, and duties

of the highest obligation; they are also the instruments through whom a supernatural agency is exerted. And hence, in the conversion of souls, we are not to compare the difficulties to be surmounted with the feeble resources of human power, but with His with whom nothing is impossible. To this the inspired historian every where directs our attention as alone sufficient to account for the signal success which crowned the labours of the first preachers. If a great multitude at Antioch turned to the Lord, it was because *the hand of the Lord was with them;* if Lydia believed, in consequence of giving attention to the things that were spoken, it was because the *Lord opened her heart;* if Paul planted and Apollos watered with success, it was *the Lord who gave the increase;* and highly as they were endowed, and though invested with such extensive authority, they did not presume to count upon any thing from themselves; their sufficiency was of God. As the possibility of such an influence can be doubted by none who believe in a Deity, so the peculiar consolation derived from the doctrine that asserts it seems to be this, that it renders what was merely possible certain, what was before vague and undetermined, fixed, by reducing the interposition of the Almighty, in the concerns of salvation, to a stated method and a settled law. The communication of the spirit, to render the gospel efficacious, becomes a standing ordinance of Heaven, and a full security for its final triumph over every opposing force. *My word*, said the Lord by the prophet, *shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish the thing whereunto I sent it.* At the same time, connected as it is by the very tenor of the promise with the publication of an external revelation, and professing to set its seal only to the testimony of Jesus, it precludes, as far as possible, every enthusiastic pretension, by leaving the appeal to Scripture as full and uncontrolled as if no such agency were supposed. It is strange that any should be found to deny a doctrine so consolatory under the pretence of its derogating from the sufficiency of revelation, when it not only ascribes to it all the efficacy that can belong to an instrument or external means, but confers the highest honour upon it, by marking it out as the only fountain of instruction to which the agency of the Deity is inseparably attached. The idea of his immediate interposition must necessarily increase our veneration for whatever is connected with it; and let it ever be remembered, that the internal illumination of the spirit is merely intended to qualify the mind for distinctly perceiving and cordially embracing those objects and no other, which are exhibited in the written word. To dispel prejudice, to excite a disposition for inquiry, and to infuse that love of the truth without which we can neither be transformed by its power nor bow to its dictates, is the grand scope of spiritual agency; and how this should derogate from the dignity of the truth itself, it is not easy to conceive. The inseparable alliance between the spirit and the word secures the harmony of the Divine dispensations; and since that spirit of truth can never contradict himself, whatever impulse he may give, whatever disposition he may communicate, it involves no irreverence towards that divine agent to compare his operations with that standing revela

tion which, equally claiming him for its author, he has expressly appointed for the trial of the spirits.

Let me earnestly entreat you, by keeping close to the fountain of grace, to secure a large measure of its influence. In your private studies and in your public performances, remember your absolute dependence on superior aid; let your conviction of this dependence become so deep and practical as to prevent your attempting any thing in your own strength, after the example of St. Paul, who, when he had occasion to advert to his labours in the gospel, checks himself by adding, with ineffable modesty, *yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.* From that vivid perception of truth, that full assurance of faith which is its inseparable attendant, you will derive unspeakable advantage in addressing your hearers; a seriousness, tenderness, and majesty will pervade your discourses, beyond what the greatest unassisted talent can command. In the choice of your subjects it will lead you to what is most solid and useful, while it enables you to handle them in a manner the most efficacious and impressive. Possessed of this celestial unction, you will not be under the temptation of neglecting a plain gospel in quest of amusing speculations or unprofitable novelties; the most ordinary topics will open themselves with a freshness and interest, as though you had never considered them before: and *the things of the Spirit* will display their inexhaustible variety and depth. You will pierce the invisible world; you will look, so to speak, into eternity, and present the essence and core of religion, while too many preachers, for want of spiritual discernment, rest satisfied with the surface and the shell. It will not allow us to throw one grain of incense on the altar of vanity; it will make us forget ourselves so completely as to convince our hearers we do so; and, displacing every thing else from the attention, leave nothing to be felt or thought of but the majesty of truth and the realities of eternity.

In proportion to the degree in which you possess this sacred influence will be the earnestness with which you implore it in behalf of your hearers. Often *will you bow the knee to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he will grant unto them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they may know what is the hope of their calling, and what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance among them that believe.*

On the one hand it deserves attention, that the most eminent and successful preachers of the gospel in different communities, a Brainerd, a Baxter, and a Schwartz, have been the most conspicuous for a simple dependence upon spiritual aid; and on the other, that no success whatever has attended the ministrations of those by whom this doctrine has been either neglected or denied. They have met with such a rebuke of their presumption, in the total failure of their efforts, that none will contend for the reality of divine interposition as far as *they* are concerned; for when has "the arm of the Lord been revealed" to those pretended teachers of Christianity who believe there is no such arm? We must leave them to labour in a field respecting which God

nas commanded the clouds not to rain upon it. As if conscious of this, of late they have turned their efforts into a new channel, and, despairing of the conversion of sinners, have confined themselves to the seduction of the faithful; in which, it must be confessed, they have acted in a manner perfectly consistent with their principles; the propagation of heresy requiring, at least, no *divine* assistance.

4. Let me request you to consider the dignity and importance of the profession which you have assumed. I am aware that the bare mention of these, as attributes of the Christian ministry (especially when exercised among Protestant dissenters), may provoke a smile: we contend, however, that if the dignity of an employment is to be estimated, not by the glitter of external appearances, but by the magnitude and duration of the consequences involved in its success, the ministerial function is an high and honourable one. Though it is not permitted us to magnify ourselves, we may be allowed to magnify our office; and, indeed, the juster the apprehensions we entertain of what belongs to it, the deeper the conviction we shall feel of our defects. Independently of every other consideration, that office cannot be mean which the Son of God condescended to sustain: for *the word which we preach first began to be spoken by the Lord;* and, while he sojourned upon earth, that Prince of life was chiefly employed in publishing his own religion. That office cannot be mean whose end is the recovery of man to his original purity and happiness—the illumination of the understanding—the communication of truth—and the production of principles which will bring forth fruit unto everlasting life. As the material part of the creation was formed for the sake of the immaterial; and of the latter the most momentous characteristic is its moral and accountable nature, or, in other words, its capacity of virtue and vice; that labour cannot want dignity which is exerted in improving man in his highest character, and fitting him for his eternal destination. Here alone is certainty and durability; for, however highly we may esteem the arts and sciences which polish our species and promote the welfare of society; whatever reverence we may feel, and ought to feel, for those laws and institutions whence it derives the security necessary for enabling it to enlarge its resources and develop its energies, we cannot forget that these are but the embellishments of a scene we must shortly quit—the decorations of a theatre, from which the eager spectators and applauded actors must soon retire. *The end of all things is at hand.* Vanity is inscribed on every earthly pursuit, on all sublunary labour; its materials, its instruments, and its objects will alike perish. An incurable taint of mortality has seized upon, and will consume them ere long. The acquisitions derived from religion, the graces of a renovated mind, are alone permanent. This is the mystic enclosure, rescued from the empire of change and death; this is the field which the Lord has blessed: and this word of the kingdom, the seed which alone produces immortal fruit, the very bread of life, with which, under a higher economy, the Lamb in the midst of the throne will feed his flock and replenish his elect through eternal ages. How high and awful a function is that which proposes to establish in the

soul an interior dominion—to illuminate its powers by a celestial light —and introduce it to an intimate, ineffable, and unchanging alliance with the Father of Spirits! What an honour to be employed as the instrument of conducting that mysterious process by which men are born of God; to expel from the heart the venom of the old serpent, to purge the conscience from invisible stains of guilt; to release the passions from the bondage of corruption and invite them to soar aloft into the regions of uncreated light and beauty; *to say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves!* These are the fruits which arise from the successful discharge of the Christian ministry; these the effects of the gospel wherever it becomes the power of God unto salvation: and the interests which they create, the joy which they diffuse, are felt in other worlds.

In insisting on the dignity attached to the ministerial office, it is far from my intention to supply fuel to vanity, or suggest such ideas of yourself as shall tempt you to "lord it over God's heritage." Let the importance of your station be rather felt and acknowledged in its beneficial results than ostentatiously displayed; and the consciousness of it, instead of being suffered to evaporate in authoritative airs and pompous pretensions, produce a concentration of your powers. If the great apostle was content to be a helper of the joy without claiming dominion over the faith of his converts, how far should we be from advancing such a claim! If he served the Lord with humility and many tears; if he appeared among the churches which he planted, "in fear and in weakness, and with much trembling," we may learn how possible it is to combine with true dignity the most unassuming deportment and the deepest conviction of our weakness and unworthiness with a vigorous discharge of whatever belongs to the apostolic, much more to the pastoral office. The proper use to be made of such considerations as have now been suggested is, to *stir up the gift which is in us*, to apply ourselves to our work with becoming resolution, and anticipate, in dependence on the divine blessing, important effects. The moment we permit ourselves to think lightly of the Christian ministry, our right arm is withered; nothing but imbecility and relaxation remains. For no man ever excelled in a profession to which he did not feel an attachment bordering on enthusiasm; though what in other professions is enthusiasm, is in ours the dictate of sobriety and truth.

5. Recollect, for your encouragement, the reward that awaits the faithful minister. Such is the mysterious condescension of divine grace, that although it reserves to itself the exclusive honour of being the fountain of all, yet, by the employment of human agency in the completion of its designs, it contrives to multiply its gifts, and to lay a foundation for eternal rewards. When the church, in the perfection of beauty, shall be presented to Christ as a bride adorned for her husband, the faithful pastor will appear as the friend of the bridegroom, who *greatly rejoices because of the bridegroom's voice.* His joy will be the joy of his Lord, inferior in degree, but of the same nature, and arising from the same sources: while he will have the peculiar hap-

pness of reflecting that he has contributed to it; contributed, as an humble instrument, to that glory and felicity of which he will be conscious he is utterly unworthy to partake. To have been himself the object of mercy, to have been the means of imparting it to others, and of dispensing the unsearchable riches of Christ, will produce a pleasure which can never be adequately felt or understood until we see him as he is. From that oneness of spirit, from that inseparable conjunction of interest, which will then be experienced in its utmost extent, will arise a capacity of sharing the triumph of the Redeemer and of participating in the delight with which he will survey his finished work, when a new and fairer creation shall arise out of the ruins of the first. And is this the end, he will exclaim, of all my labours, my toils, and watchings, my expostulation with sinners, and my efforts to console the faithful! and is this the issue of that ministry under which I was often ready to sink! and this the glory of which I heard so much, understood so little, and announced to my hearers with lisping accents and a stammering tongue! well might it be styled the glory *to be revealed*. Auspicious day! on which I embarked in this undertaking, on which the love of Christ, with a sweet and sacred violence, impelled me to feed his sheep and to feed his lambs. With what emotion shall we, who, being intrusted with so holy a ministry, shall find mercy to be faithful, hear that voice from heaven, *Rejoice and be glad, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready!* With what rapture shall we recognise, amid an innumerable multitude, the seals of our ministry, the persons whom we have been the means of conducting to that glory!

Hence we discern the futility of the objection against the doctrine of future rewards, drawn from an apprehension that to be actuated by such a motive argues a mean and mercenary disposition; since the reward to which we aspire, in this instance at least, grows out of the employment in which we are engaged, and will consist in enjoyments which can only be felt and perceived by a refined and elevated spirit. The success of our undertaking will, in reality, reward itself, by the complete gratification it will afford to the sentiments of devotion and benevolence which, in their highest perfection, form the principal ingredient in future felicity. To have co-operated in any degree towards the accomplishment of that purpose of the Deity to reconcile all things to himself by reducing them to the obedience of his Son, which is the ultimate end of all his works,—to be the means of recovering, though it were but an inconsiderable portion of a lapsed and degenerate race, to eternal happiness, will yield a satisfaction exactly commensurate to the force of our benevolent sentiments, and the degree of our loyal attachment to the supreme Potentate. The consequences involved in *saving a soul from death, and hiding a multitude of sins*, will be duly appreciated in that world where the worth of souls and the malignity of sin are fully understood; while, to extend the triumphs of the Redeemer, by forming him in the hearts of men, will produce a transport which can only be equalled by the gratitude and love we shall feel towards the Source of all our good.

Before I close this discourse, which has, perhaps, already detained you too long, let me suggest one reflection which so naturally arises from the view we have taken of the ministerial office that I cannot think it right to pass it over in silence. The consideration to which we allude respects the advantages possessed by the Christian minister for the cultivation of personal piety. *Blessed is the man*, said the royal Psalmist, *whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee; blessed are they who dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee.* If he was so strongly impressed with a conviction of the high privilege annexed to the priesthood, by virtue of its being allowed a nearer approach to God in the services of the sanctuary, the situation of a Christian minister is not less distinguished, nor less desirable. It is the only one in which our general calling as Christians, and our particular calling as men, perfectly coincide. In a life occupied in actions that terminate in the present moment, and in cares and pursuits extremely disproportionate to the dignity of our nature, but rendered necessary by the imperfection of our state; it is but little of their time that the greater part of mankind can devote to the direct and immediate pursuit of their eternal interests. A few remnants, snatched from the business of life, are all that most can bestow. In our profession, the full force and vigour of the mind may be exerted on that which will employ it for ever,—on *religion*, the final centre of repose; the goal to which all things tend, which gives to time all its importance, to eternity all its glory; apart from which man is a shadow, his very existence a riddle, and the stupendous scenes which surround him as incoherent and unmeaning as the leaves which the sybil scattered in the wind. Our inaptitude to be affected in any measure proportioned to the intrinsic value of the interest in which we are concerned, and the objects with which we are conversant, is partly to be ascribed to the corruption of nature, partly to the limitation of our faculties. As far as this disproportion is capable of being corrected, the pursuits connected with our office are unquestionably best adapted to that purpose, by closely fixing the attention on objects which can never be contemned but in consequence of being forgotten, nor ever surveyed with attention without filling the whole sphere of vision. Though the scene of our labour is on earth, the things to which it relates subsist in eternity. We can give no account of our office, much less discharge any branch of it with propriety and effect, without adverting to a future state of being; while in a happy exemption from the tumultuous cares of life, our only concern with mankind, as far as it respects our official character, is to promote their everlasting welfare; our only business on earth, the very same that employs those exalted spirits who are sent forth on embassies of mercy, *to minister to them who shall be the heirs of salvation.* Our duties and pursuits are distinguished from all others by their immediate relation to the ultimate end of human existence; so that, while secular employments can be rendered innocent only by an extreme care to avoid the pollutions which they are so liable to contract, the ministerial functions bear an indelible impress of sanctity. The purposes accomplished

by the ministry of the gospel, in the restoration of a fallen creature to the image of his Maker, are not among the *things which were made for man:* they are the *things for which man was made;* since, without regard to time or place, they are essential to his perfection and happiness. How much of heaven is naturally connected with an office whose sole purpose is to conduct man thither! and what a superiority to the love of the world may be expected from men who are appointed to publish that dispensation which reveals its danger, detects its vanity, rebukes its disorders, and foretels its destruction!

He must know little of the world, and still less of his own heart, who is not aware how difficult it is, amid the corrupting examples with which it abounds, to maintain the spirit of devotion unimpaired, or to preserve, in their due force and delicacy, those vivid moral impressions, that quick perception of good, and instinctive abhorrence of evil, which form the chief characteristic of a pure and elevated mind. These, like the morning dew, are easily brushed off in the collisions of worldly interest, or exhaled by the meridian sun. Hence the necessity of frequent intervals of retirement, when the mind may recover its scattered powers, and renew its strength by a devout application to the Fountain of all grace.

To the ordinary occupations of life we are rather indebted for the trial of our virtue than for the matter, or the motive; and, however criminal it would be to neglect them, in our present state, they can only be reduced under the dominion of religion by a general intention of pleasing God. But in carrying into effect the designs of the gospel, we are communicating that pure element of good which, like the solar light, pervades every part of the universe, and forms, there is every reason to believe, the most essential ingredient in the felicity of all created beings.

If, in the actual commerce of the world, the noblest principles are often sacrificed to mean expedients, and the rules of moral rectitude made to bend to the indulgence of vain and criminal passions, how happy for us that we are under the necessity of contemplating them in their abstract grandeur, of viewing them as an emanation of the divine beauty; as the immutable law of the creation, imbodied in the character of the Saviour, and illustrated in the elevated sentiments, the holy lives, and triumphant deaths of prophets, saints, and martyrs! *We* are called, every moment, to ascend to first principles, *to stand in the council of God*, and to imbibe the dictates of celestial wisdom in their *first* communication, before they become debased and contaminated by a mixture with grosser elements.

The bane of human happiness is ordinarily not so much an absolute ignorance of what is best, as an inattention to it, accompanied with a habit of not adverting to prospects the most certain, and the most awful. But how can we be supposed to contract this inadvertence, who are incessantly engaged in placing truth in every possible light, tracing it in its utmost extent, and exhibiting it in all its evidence! Can we be supposed to forget *that day and that hour, of which no man knoweth*, who are stationed as watchmen to give the alarm, to announce

the first symptoms of danger, and to cry in the ears of a sleeping world, *Behold, the bridegroom cometh:* or, however inattentive others may be to the approach of our Lord, can it ever vanish from our minds, who are detained by him in his sanctuary on purpose to preserve it pure, to trim the golden lamps, and maintain the hallowed fire, that he may find nothing neglected, or in disorder, when he *shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom we delight in?*

Men are ruined in their eternal interests by failing to look within; by being so absorbed in the pursuit of earthly good as to neglect the state of their hearts. But can this be supposed to be the case with us, who must never hope to discharge our office with effect without an intimate acquaintance with the inward man—without tracing the secret operations of nature and of grace—without closely inspecting the causes of revival, and of decay, in the spiritual life, and detecting the most secret springs and plausible artifices of temptation; in all which we shall be successful just in proportion to the degree of devout attention we bestow on the movements of our own minds.

Men are ruined in their eternal interests by living as though they were their own, and neglecting to realize the certainty of a future account. But it must surely require no small effort to divert our attention from this truth, who have not only the same interest in it with others, but, in consequence of the care of souls, possess a responsibility of a distinct and awful character; since not one of those to whom that care extends can fall short of salvation through our neglect or default, but *his blood will be required at our hands.* Where, in short, can we turn our eyes without meeting with incentives to piety. What part of the sacred function can we touch which will not remind us of the beauty of holiness, the evil of sin, and the emptiness of all sublunary good; or, where shall we not find ourselves in a temple resounding with awful voices, and filled with holy inspirations?

I feel a pleasing conviction, that, in consequence of deriving from your ministry that spiritual aid it is so adapted to impart, both your piety and usefulness will continue to increase, and by being intimately incorporated, aid and strengthen each other; so that your profiting shall appear unto all men, and while you are watering others, you yourself shall be abundantly watered of God. Thus will you be enabled to adopt the language of the beloved apostle, *That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life, declare we unto you.* Thus will you possess that unction from which your hearers cannot fail, under the divine blessing, to reap the highest benefit; for while we are exploring the mines of revelation for the purpose of exhibiting to mankind the *unsearchable riches of Christ*, we are not in the situation of those unhappy men who merely toil for the advantage of others, and dare not appropriate to themselves an atom of that precious ore on which their labour is employed: we are permitted and invited first to enrich ourselves, and the more we appropriate the more shall we impart. It is my earnest prayer, my dear brother, *that you may feed the Church of the Lord which he has purchased with*

his own blood; that you may make full proof of your ministry; be instant in season and out of season; teach, exhort, and rebuke, with all long-suffering and authority. Then, should you be spared to your flock, you will witness the fruit of your labours in a spiritual plantation, growing under your hand, adorned with *trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified;* and while, neglecting worldly considerations, you are intent on the high ends of your calling, inferior satisfactions will not be wanting, but you will meet among the seals of your ministry with fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers. Or should your career be prematurely cut short, you will have lived long enough to answer the purposes of your being, and to leave a record in the consciences of your hearers, which will not suffer you soon to be forgotten. Though dead, you will still speak; you will speak from the tomb; it may be, in accents more powerful and persuasive than your living voice could command.

AN ADDRESS

TO

THE REV. EUSTACE CAREY,

JANUARY 19, 1814,

IN HIS DESIGNATION AS A CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY TO INDIA.

AN ADDRESS.

As it has been usual in the designation of a missionary, after solemnly commending him to God by prayer, to deliver a short address; in compliance with a custom not perhaps improper or illaudable, I shall request your attention to a few hints of advice, without attempting a regular charge, which I neither judge myself equal to nor deem necessary, since on your arrival in India you will receive from your venerable relative Dr. Carey instruction more ample and appropriate than it is in my power to communicate.

When the first missionaries who visited these western parts were sent out, their designation was accompanied with prayer and fasting; whence we may infer that fervent supplication ought to form the distinguishing feature in the exercises appropriated to these occasions.

An effusion of the spirit of prayer on the church of Christ is a surer pledge of success in the establishment of missions than the most splendid exhibitions of talent. As there is no engagement more entirely spiritual in its nature, nor whose success is more immediately dependent on God, than that on which you are entering; to none is that spiritual aid more indispensably necessary which is chiefly awarded to the prayers of the faithful.

Separate to me, said the Holy Ghost to the disciples assembled at Antioch, *separate to me Barnabas and Saul, to the work whereunto I have called them.* When the omniscient Searcher of hearts separates a Christian minister from his brethren and assigns him a distinct work, it implies the previous perception of certain qualifications for its successful discharge not generally possessed; for though none can give the increase but God, much of his wisdom is to be traced in the selection of instruments fitted to his purpose. The first and most essential qualification for a missionary is a decided predilection for the office; not the effect of sudden impulse, but of serious, deep consideration; a predilection strengthened and matured by deliberately counting the cost. Every man has his proper calling; and while the greater part of Christian teachers are perfectly satisfied with attempting to do all the good in their power in their native land, there are others of a more enterprising character, inflamed with the holy ambition of carrying the glad tidings beyond the bounds of Christendom; like the great apostle of the gentiles, who was determined not to build on another man's foundation, but if possible to preach Christ in regions where his name was not known. The circumstances which contribute to such a reso

lution are various, often too subtle and complicated to admit of a distinct analysis: a constitutional ardour of mind, a natural neglect of difficulties and dangers, an impatience of being confined within the trammels of ordinary duties, together with many accidental associations and impressions, may combine to form a missionary spirit; nor is it so necessary minutely to investigate the causes which have led to a given determination, as the legitimacy of the object and the purity of the motive.

We adore the prolific Source of all good, in the variety and discrimination of his gifts, by which he imparts a separate character and allots a distinct sphere of operation to the general and essential principles which form the Christian and the minister. *He gave some apostles and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*

The sacred impulse to which we have adverted I am certain you have felt in no common degree, and that it has been your ardent wish to be employed as a messenger to the heathen from the time you devoted yourself to the ministry. Of your possessing this most essential prerequisite for the office you have undertaken it is impossible for those who know you to entertain a doubt.

The next qualification of whose necessity I must be allowed to remind you is singular *self-devotement*, without a degree of which it is not possible to be a Christian, still less to any useful purpose a minister, least of all a missionary. In resolving to quit your native country, and to relinquish your nearest connexions, with little expectation of beholding them again in the flesh, you have given decisive indications of this spirit; nor to a mind like yours, exquisitely alive to the sensibilities of nature and friendship, can the sacrifice you have already made be deemed inconsiderable. But as it is still impossible for you to conjecture the extent of the privations and trials to which, in the pursuit of your object, you may be exposed, your situation is not unlike that of Abraham, who being commanded to leave his own country and his father's house, went out not knowing whither he went. As you are entering on an untried scene, where difficulties may arise to exercise your patience and fortitude of which you can form but a very inadequate conception, you will do well to contemplate the example and meditate the words of St. Paul in circumstances not very dissimilar:—*And now I go up bound in spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing what shall befall me there, save that in every city the Holy Ghost witnesseth that bonds and affliction await me: but none of these things move me; neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry I have received of the Lord to fulfil it.* The love of ease or the indulgence of secular ambition would be fatal to the object you are pursuing; nor in your situation is there any thing so much to be dreaded as a divided heart, a spirit which hesitates between the calls of duty and the attractions of the world. *To arm yourself with the same mind that was in Christ, who himself suffered, leaving us an example that we should walk in his steps*, is a

most indispensable part of your duty. In proportion as you feel yourself a stranger upon the earth, eagerly attached to none of its enjoyments or pursuits, prepared without repining to relinquish whatever Providence may demand, and suffer whatever it may inflict; in a word, in proportion to the degree in which you abandon all right in yourself, will you be qualified for the work of an evangelist. Purged from earthly concretions and worldly passions, you will become *a vessel of honour fitted for the Master's use.* He who is not possessed of a considerable portion of a self-denying spirit, which was eminently the spirit of Him *who pleased not himself*, can engage in no employment more irksome and intolerable than that of a missionary; for what pleasure can he expect, what advantage can he hope to reap, independent of the consciousness or the hope of doing good? By the nature of your undertaking, all the avenues to secular reputation and emolument are shut against you; on the brilliant illusions with which the children of this world are enchanted you have closed your eyes, and nothing is left but the severe and sublime satisfaction of following in the steps of those apostles and prophets who, in the midst of the derision of the world, exhausted themselves in a series of efforts to enlighten and to save it. You have chosen, it is true, the better part; but it is a part which you must not hope to sustain but by the perfect subjection and mortification of every rival passion. You must be content to derive your satisfaction from yourself, or rather from your consciousness of the Divine approbation, since you will meet with few disposed to sympathize in your sorrows or rejoice in your success.

The next qualification necessary for a teacher of Christianity among heathens is the *spirit of faith*, by which I intend, not merely that cordial belief of the truth which is essential to a Christian, but that unshaken persuasion of the promises of God respecting the triumph and enlargement of his kingdom which is sufficient to denominate its possessor *strong in faith.* It is impossible that the mind of a missionary should be too much impressed with the beauty, glory, and grandeur of the kingdom of Christ, as it is unfolded in the oracles of the Old and New Testaments; or with the certainty of the final accomplishment of those oracles, founded on the faithfulness and omnipotence of their Author. To those parts of Scripture his attention should be especially directed in which the Holy Ghost employs and exhausts, so to speak, the whole force and splendour of inspiration in depicting the future reign of the Messiah, together with that astonishing spectacle of dignity, purity, and peace which his church will exhibit when, *having the glory of God*, her bounds shall be commensurate with those of the habitable globe; when every object on which the eye shall rest will remind the spectator of the commencement of a new age, in which the tabernacle of God is with men and he dwells among them. His spirit should be imbued with that sweet and tender awe which such anticipations will infallibly produce, whence will spring a generous contempt of the world, and an ardour bordering on impatience to be employed, though in the humblest sphere, as the instrument of accelerating such a period. For compared to this destiny in reserve for the

children of men, compared to this glory, invisible at present, and hid behind the clouds which envelop this dark and troubled scene, the brightest day that has hitherto shone upon the world is midnight, and the highest splendours that have invested it the shadow of death.

Independent of these assurances, the idea of converting pagan nations to the Christian faith must appear chimerical. The attempt to persuade them to relinquish their ancient mode of thinking, corroborated by habit, by example, by interest, and to adopt a new system of opinions and feelings, and enter on a new course of life, will ever be deemed by the worldly-wise impracticable and visionary. *Pass over the isles of Chittim and see*, said the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, *and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods?* For a nation to *change* their gods is represented by the highest authority as an event almost unparalleled: and if it be so difficult to induce them to change the *mode* of their idolatry, how much more to persuade them to abandon it altogether! Idolatry is not to be looked upon as a mere speculative error respecting the object of worship, of little or no practical efficacy. Its hold upon the mind of a fallen creature is most tenacious, its operation most extensive. It is a corrupt practical institution, involving a whole system of sentiments and manners which perfectly moulds and transforms its votaries. It modifies human nature in every aspect under which it can be contemplated, being intimately blended and incorporated with all its perceptions of good and evil, with all its infirmities, passions, and fears. In a country like India, where it has been established for ages, its ramifications are so extended as to come into contact with every mode and every incident of life. Scarce a day or an hour passes with a Hindoo, in which, by the abstinences it enjoins and the ceremonies it prescribes, he is not reminded of his religion. It meets him at every turn, presses like the atmosphere on all sides, and holds him by a thousand invisible chains. By incessantly admonishing him of something which he must do, or something which he must forbear, it becomes the strongest of his active habits; while the multiplicity of objects of worship, distinguished by an infinite variety in their character and exploits, is sufficient to fill the whole sphere of his imagination. In the indolent repose which his constitution and climate incline him to indulge, he suffers his fancy to wander without limit amid scenes of voluptuous enjoyment or objects of terror and dismay; while revolving the history of his gods, he conceives himself absorbed in holy contemplations. There is not a vicious passion he can be disposed to cherish, not a crime he can be tempted to commit for which he may not find a sanction and an example in the legends of his gods. Though the system of polytheism established in India, considered in an argumentative light, is beneath contempt, being destitute of the least shadow of proof, as well as of all coherence in its principles; yet, viewed as an instrument of establishing a despotic empire over the mind, nothing, it must be acknowledged, was ever more artfully contrived; not to mention the distinction of castes which is obviously adapted to fix and perpetuate every other institu-

tion. That the true religion should degenerate into idolatry is easily to be accounted for from the known principles of human nature, because such deterioration is aided by its corruption, flatters its strongest propensities, and artfully adapts itself to whatever is feeble, sensitive, and voluptuous in the character of the species.

——Facilis descensus Averni.

As it is easy to descend from an elevation which it is difficult to climb, to fall from the adoration of the Supreme Being to the worship of idols demands no effort. Idolatry is strongly intrenched in the corruptions, and fortified by the weakness of human nature. Hence we find all nations have sunk into it in succession, frequently in opposition to the strongest remonstrances of inspired prophets, while we have no example in the history of the world of a single city, family, or individual who has renounced it through the mere operation of unassisted reason: such is the fatal propensity of mankind to that enormity. It is the veil of the covering cast over all flesh, which nothing but the effulgence of revelation has pierced. The true religion satisfies and enlarges the reason, but militates against the inclinations of men. Resting on a few sublime truths, addressed to the understanding and conscience, affording few distinct images to the fancy, and no indulgence to the passions, it can only be planted and preserved by a continual efflux from its Divine Author, of whose spirituality and elevation it so largely partakes.

But however difficult it may be to prevail upon men to relinquish the practice of idolatry, the accomplishment of this is not the whole, perhaps not the most arduous part of your work, since you are too well acquainted with the genius of Christianity to permit yourself to rest satisfied with any external profession which is destitute of the fruits of the Spirit. The change you wish to realize, and which you will alone contemplate with satisfaction, is the effectual conversion of the soul from sin to holiness, and from the world to God; and how much the necessity of this increases the difficulty of propagating the gospel among heathens with success is so obvious that I need not insist upon it at large. The valley of vision in Ezekiel, filled with bones which are very dry, is no exaggerated picture of the state of the heathen world; and what less than an Almighty power can clothe them with sinews, cover them with flesh, and breathe into them the breath of life?

Hence the absolute necessity of a vigorous faith in the promises of God respecting the future renovation of mankind, which will support you amid the greatest discouragements, prompt you to hope against hope, and inspire you with unshaken perseverance and resolution; besides that on account of the glory it gives to God, it imparts by divine appointment to its possessor an interest in his all-sufficiency and power. It is a mysterious link in the chain of moral causes and effects which connects the weakness of the creature with the almightiness of God. *Be it unto thee*, said our Lord on a certain occasion, *be it unto thee according to thy faith.* Faith, considered as a mere speculative assent

to the truth of a divine testimony, may be looked upon as uniform or stationary; but when we consider it as a practical principle, as one of the graces of the Spirit, we perceive it to be, in common with others, susceptible of continual enlargement and increase. In the degree of power which future and invisible realities exert over the mind, in the practical energy of what men profess to believe, in the promptitude and certainty with which it determines them to a correspondent conduct, there is the utmost diversity even among those who believe with the heart. The faith to which the Scriptures attach such momentous consequences, and ascribe such glorious exploits, is a practical habit, which, like every other, is strengthened and increased by continual exercise. It is nourished by meditation, by prayer, and the devout perusal of the Scriptures; and the light which it diffuses becomes stronger and clearer by an unintercepted converse with its object and a faithful compliance with its dictates; as on the contrary it is weakened and obscured by whatever wounds the conscience or impairs the purity and spirituality of the mind. This is the shield which will cover you from every assault; the chief part of that defensive armour which it behooves you to put on. Reposing on the word of Him with whom all things are possible, of Him who cannot lie; in the formidable bulwarks of idolatry, in the invincible rampart of prejudice and superstition which the great adversary of mankind has cast up to obstruct the progress of truth, you will see nothing to appal you: you will feel the battle not to be yours, but the Lord's, who, determined to subdue his enemies under his feet, condescends to employ you as an humble instrument of his victories; and instead of sinking under the consciousness of weakness, you will glory in your infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon you.

Allow me to remind you of the absolute necessity of cultivating a mild, conciliating, affectionate temper in the discharge of your office. If an uninterested spectator, after a careful perusal of the New Testament, were asked what he conceived to be its distinguishing characteristic, he would reply without hesitation, that wonderful spirit of philanthropy by which it is distinguished. It is a perpetual commentary on that sublime aphorism, *God is love.* As the Christian religion is an exhibition of the incomprehensible mercy of God to a guilty race, so it is dispensed in a manner perfectly congenial with its nature; and the book which contains it is replete with such unaffected strokes of tenderness and goodness as are to be found in no other volume. The benign spirit of the gospel infused itself into the breast of its first missionaries. In St. Paul, for example, we behold the most heroic resolution, the most lofty superiority to all the modes of intimidation and danger, a spirit which rose with its difficulties and exulted in the midst of the most dismaying objects; yet when we look more narrowly into his character, and investigate his motives, we perceive it was his attachment to mankind that inspired him with this intrepidity, and urged him to conflicts more painful and arduous than the votaries of glory have ever sustained. Who would have supposed it possible for the same breast to be the seat of so much energy and

so much softness? that he who changed the face of the world by his preaching, and while a prisoner made his judge tremble on the tribunal, could stoop to embrace a fugitive slave, and to employ the most exquisite address to effect his reconciliation with his master? The conversion of Onesimus afforded him a joy *like the joy of harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.* When the spiritual interests of mankind were concerned, no difficulties so formidable as to shake his resolution, no details so insignificant as to escape his notice. To the utmost inflexibility of principle he joined the gentlest condescension to human infirmity, *becoming all things to all men, that he might win some: to the Jews he became a Jew, that he might gain the Jews, to them that were without law, as without law,* adapting on all occasions his modes of address to the character and disposition of those with whom he conversed. It was the love of Christ and of souls that produced and harmonized those apparent discordances.

Such is the example you must propose for your imitation, if you would realize to any considerable extent the object of your mission to the heathen. By a mild and unassuming deportment, by an attention to their worldly as well as to their spiritual interests, by adopting, as far as you have ability, whatever may contribute to their happiness and improvement, convince them that you are the friend of man. When you have established yourself in their affections, you have gained an important point; you have possessed yourself of a signal advantage for the successful prosecution of your work.

Your business is to persuade men; and how can you expect to succeed unless you conciliate their regard? which is more necessary on account of the seeming severity which attaches to some part of the doctrine of Christ. Were you permitted to inculcate a self-pleasing doctrine, the want of suavity and gentleness of manner might easily be dispensed with; the laxity of the precept would compensate for the austerity of the teacher. But when you are called to insist on the state of man as a fallen and guilty creature, to enforce the necessity of self-denial, to impose the most powerful restraints on the indulgence of criminal passions; when you must denounce the wrath of God against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, great mildness and affection are requisite to prevent such representations from exciting disgust. What is awful and alarming in Christianity should be softened and tempered by a persuasive tenderness of address. Let it be your care to divest religion of whatever is unlovely and repulsive, that it may appear not only pure, but gentle; not only majestic, but amiable; equally favourable to the enjoyment and the communication of happiness. But I have dwelt longer on this head than was necessary, when I recollect that the person I am addressing is distinguished by a temper which will render the mild condescensions I am recommending not more his duty than his delight.

The affectionate and conciliatory disposition we have been enforcing must be combined with prudence and the diligent study of human nature, which you will find absolutely necessary to conduct you through intricate and unbeaten paths. St. Paul frequently reminds the Thessa-

lonians of the *manner of his entrance* among them. In the first introduction of the gospel among a people, it is of great importance that every step be well weighed, that nothing be done which is rash, offensive, or indecorous, but every precaution employed consistent with godly simplicity to disarm prejudice and conciliate respect; nor is there any thing in the conduct of the first ministers of the gospel more to be admired than the exquisite propriety with which they conducted themselves in the most delicate situations. Their zeal was exempt from indecorum, their caution from timidity or art. In the commencement of every great and hazardous undertaking the first measures are usually decisive, at least in those instances in which success is dependent, under God, on the voluntary co-operation of mankind. A single act of imprudence is sufficient to blast the undertaking of a missionary, which, in the situation of an ordinary minister, would scarcely be felt. The best method of securing yourself from errors in this quarter is to endeavour to acquire as large a measure as possible of the graces of the spirit, to be deeply imbued with the wisdom which is from above. Nothing subtle or refined should enter into the views of a Christian missionary. Let him be continually elevating his principles, and purifying his motives; let him be clothed with humility, and actuated on all occasions with love to God and the souls of men, and his character cannot fail of being marked with a propriety and beauty which will ultimately command universal esteem. These were the only arts which a Schwartz in the east, and a Brainerd in the west, condescended to cultivate.

It must be remembered, however, that the functions of a missionary connect him more with mankind than ordinary ministers, and less admit of an entire abstraction from the world; on which account he will sometimes be exposed to difficulties from which nothing can extricate him but a considerable acquaintance with men and things. He will probably be called to transact affairs of considerable moment with persons in superior stations, with men of dissimilar characters and habits, of different nations and religions, who possess nothing in common but the epidemic selfishness of human nature; in an intercourse with whom he will need the wisdom of the serpent combined with the innocence of the dove. The prudence, however, which it is desirable a missionary should possess is not a timid, calculating policy; it is manly and heroic, operating with promptitude and vigour on an extensive fund of knowledge, acquired by habits of acute and vigilant observation. Of many functions of life it is possible to foresee the duties they comprise, and to ascertain beforehand the extent of their demand on our time and talents. In the office of a missionary it is impossible. His engagements must be in a great degree fortuitous, arising out of circumstances which he could neither foresee nor control; and hence, unless he possess a prompt and enlightened judgment, he will often feel himself embarrassed and perplexed.

There is much in the situation of a missionary calculated to keep him awake and attentive to his duties. To a stated pastor, it is confessed, there are not wanting powerful motives to diligence and exer-

tion, at the same time that it is equally obvious there are considerable temptations to indolence and formality. Since the services he is engaged to perform admit of little variety, and are easily reducible to a system, they are in no small danger of being performed rather from the mechanism of habit than the impulse of feeling, and much ardour of mind is requisite to infuse freshness and novelty into a series of operations so uniform. In the performance of duties which proceed in a settled routine, it is equally difficult to feel and to impart an interest. With the missionary it is quite the reverse. Incapable as he is of forming a conception of the situation in which he may be placed, or of the difficulties with which he may be surrounded, he must be conscious his undertaking involves a character of enterprise and hazard. He is required to explore new paths; and leaving the footsteps of the flock, to go in quest of the lost sheep, on whatever mountain it may have wandered, or in whatever valley it may be hid. He must be prepared to encounter prejudice and error in strange and unwonted shapes, to trace the aberrations of reason, and the deviations from rectitude through all the diversified mazes of superstition and idolatry. He is engaged in a series of offensive operations: he is in the field of battle, wielding *weapons which are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down the strongholds of Satan.* When not in action he is yet encamped in an enemy's country, where nothing can secure his acquisitions or preserve him from surprise but incessant vigilance. The voluntary exile from his native country to which he submits is sufficient to remind him continually of his important embassy, and to induce a solicitude that so many sacrifices may not be made, so many privations undergone in vain. He holds the lamp of instruction to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death; and while there remains a particle of ignorance not expelled, a single prejudice not vanquished, a sinful or idolatrous custom not relinquished, his task is left unfinished. It is not enough for him on a stated day to address an audience on the concerns of eternity: he must teach from house to house, and be instant in season and out of season, embracing every opportunity which offers of inculcating the principles of a new religion as well as of *confirming the souls of his disciples.* He must consider himself as the mouth and interpreter of that wisdom *which crieth without, which uttereth her voice in the streets, which crieth in the chief places of concourse.*

Under these impressions you will peruse the Acts of the Apostles, which record the methods by which the gospel was first propagated, with deep attention, where you will trace precedents the most instructive as well as difficulties surmounted and trials endured exactly similar to your own; nor will you fail to feel a sympathy of spirit with those holy men in their labours and sufferings, which other ministers can but very imperfectly possess. Encompassed with such a cloud of witnesses, you will esteem it no inconsiderable honour to share in the same combat, encounter the same enemies, and accomplish the share allotted you of those sufferings which remain to Christ's mystical body. I scarcely need recommend to your attention the letters of St.

Paul to Timothy and Titus, where the office of an evangelist (for such you must consider yourself) is delineated with such precision and fidelity. While you peruse his inspired directions you are entitled to consider yourself as addressed, inasmuch as the spirit under whose direction they were written unquestionably intended them for the instruction of all who are in similar circumstances.

In directing your view to apostolical precedents, attend not so much to their *letter* as to their *spirit:* investigate carefully the circumstances in which they were placed; compare them with your own with respect to the particulars in which they coincide and in which they differ, that you may follow them, not as a servile copyist, but as a judicious and enlightened imitator.

Be *strong* in the grace that is in the Lord Jesus. Among the nations which will be the scene of your future labours, you will witness a state of things essentially different from that which prevails here, where the name of Christ is held in reverence, the principal doctrines of his religion speculatively acknowledged, and the institutes of worship widely extended and diffused. The leaven of Christian piety has spread itself in innumerable directions, modified public opinion, improved the state of society, and given birth to many admirable institutions unknown to pagan countries. The authority of the Saviour is recognised, his injunctions in some instances obeyed, and the outrages of impiety restrained by law, by custom, and, above all, by the silent counteraction of piety in its sincere professors. Hence, in combating the vices and irreligion of the age, so many principles are conceded, and so much ground already won from the adversary, that little remains but to urge him with the legitimate consequences of his own opinions, and to rouse the dormant energies of conscience by the exhibition of acknowledged truth. Ministers of the gospel in this quarter of the globe resemble the commanders of an army stationed in a conquered country, whose inhabitants, overawed and subdued, yield a partial obedience; they have sufficient employment in attempting to conciliate the affections of the natives, and in carrying into execution the orders and regulations of their Prince; since there is much latent disaffection, though no open rebellion, a strong partiality to their former rulers, with few attempts to erect the standard of revolt.

In India, Satan maintains an almost undisputed empire, and the powers of darkness, secure of their dominion, riot and revel at their pleasure, sporting themselves with the misery of their vassals, whom they incessantly agitate with delusive hopes and fantastic terrors, leading them captive at their will, while few efforts have been made to despoil them of their usurped authority. Partial invasions have been attempted and a few captives disenthralled; but the strength and sinews of empire remain entire, and that dense and palpable darkness which invests it has scarcely felt the impression of a few feeble and scattered rays. In India you will witness the predominance of a system which provides for the worship of gods many and of lords many, while it excludes the adoration of the Supreme Being, legitimates cruelty, polygamy, and lust, debases the standard of morals, oppresses

with ceremonies those whom it deprives of instruction, and suggests no solid hope of happiness beyond the grave.

You will witness with indignation that monstrous alliance between impurity and devotion, obscenity and religion, which characterizes the popular idolatry of all nations, and which, in opposition to the palliating sophistry of infidels, sufficiently evinces it to be, what the Scriptures assert—the worship of devils, not of God.

When we consider that moral causes operate on free agents, we shall not be surprised to find their effects are less uniform than those which result from the action of material and physical powers, and that human minds are susceptible of opposite impressions from the same objects.

On such as have neither been established in the evidences nor felt the efficacy of revealed religion, a residence in a pagan country has usually a most pernicious effect, and matures latent irreligion into open impiety. The absence of Christian institutions and Christian examples leaves them at liberty to gratify their sensual inclinations without control, and the familiar contemplation of pagan manners and customs gradually wears out every trace and vestige of the religion in which they were educated, and imboldens them to consider it in the light of a local superstition. They are no further converts to the Brahminical faith than to prefer it to their own; that is, they prefer the religion they can despise with impunity to one that afflicts their consciences,—that which leaves them free to that which restrains them. As the secret language of their heart had always been, *cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from among us*, in the absence of God, of his institutes, and his worship, they find a congenial element, nor are they at all displeased at perceiving the void filled with innumerable fantastic shapes and chimeras; for they contemplate religion with great composure, providing it be sufficiently ridiculous.

You, I am persuaded, will view the condition of millions who are involved in the shades of idolatry, originally formed in the image of God, now totally estranged from their great Parent, and reposing their trust on things which cannot profit, with different emotions, and will be anxious to recall them to the Bishop and Shepherd of their souls. Instead of considering the most detestable species of idolatry as so many different modes of worshipping the One Supreme, agreeable to the jargon of infidels, you will not hesitate to regard them as an impious attempt to share his incommunicable honours: as composing that image of jealousy which he is engaged to smite, confound, and destroy. When you compare the incoherence, extravagance, and absurdity which pervade the systems of polytheism with the simple and sublime truths of the gospel, the result will be an increased attachment to that mystery of godliness. When you observe the anxiety of the Hindoo devotee to obtain the pardon of sin, and the incredible labours and sufferings which he cheerfully undergoes to quiet the perturbations of conscience, the doctrine of the cross will rise, if possible, still higher in your esteem, and you will long for an opportunity of crying in his ears, *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world*

When you witness the immolation of females on the funeral pile of their husbands, and the barbarous treatment of aged parents left by their children to perish on the banks of the Ganges, you will recognise the footsteps of him who was a murderer from the beginning, and will be impatient to communicate the mild and benevolent maxims of the gospel. When you behold an immense population held in chains by that detestable institution the *caste*, as well as bowed down under an intolerable weight of Brahminical superstitions, you will long to impart the liberty which Christ confers, *where there is neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all.*

The cultivation of a wilderness, however, requires a more robust and vigorous industry than is necessary to preserve in a good condition the ground which is already reclaimed. The noxious produce of a long tract of time must be extirpated, the stubborn and intractable soil broken up, marshes drained, irregularities levelled, and much persevering labour employed, ere the ordinary operations of agriculture can commence, or the seed be cast into the earth. In attempting to evangelize the inhabitants of pagan countries, you must expect to encounter peculiar difficulties: you will meet in the natives with the ignorance and mental imbecility of children, without the candour, simplicity, and freedom from prejudice which are among the charms of that tender age. To efface erroneous impressions, to eradicate false principles, and reduce them even to a natural state, defective and corrupt as that state is, will be no inconsiderable task, since there is not only an immense void to be filled and great deficiencies to be supplied, but principles and prejudices to contend with, capable of the most active resistance.

In recommending the principles of Christianity to a pagan nation, I would by no means advise the adoption of a refined and circuitous course of instruction, commencing with an argumentative exposition of the principles of natural religion, and from thence advancing to the peculiar doctrines of revelation; nor would I advise you to devote much time to an elaborate confutation of the Hindoo or Mahometan systems. The former of these methods would be far too subtle and intricate for popular use; the latter calculated to irritate. Great practical effects on the populace are never produced by profound argumentation; and every thing which tends to irritation and disgust should be carefully avoided. Let your instruction be in the form of a *testimony:* let it, with respect to the mode of exhibiting it, though not to the spirit of the teacher, be *dogmatic. Testify* repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. It might become a Socrates, who was left to the light of nature, to express himself with diffidence, and to affirm that he had spared no pains in acting up to the character of a philosopher,—in other words, a diligent inquirer after truth; but whether he had philosophized aright, or attained the object of his inquiries, he knew not, but left it to be ascertained in that world on which he was entering. In him such indications of modest distrust were graceful and affecting, but would little become the disciple of revelation or the Christian minister, who is entitled to say with St. John, *we* know *that the whole world lieth in wickedness, and that the Son of God is come,*

and hath given us an understanding to know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.

After reminding them of their state as guilty and polluted creatures, which the ceremonies of their religion teach them to confess, exhibit to the inhabitants of Hindostan the cross of Christ as their only refuge. Acquaint them with his incarnation, his character as the Son of God and the Son of man, his offices, and the design of his appearance; not with the air of a disputer of this world, but of him who is conscious to himself of his possessing the medicine of life, the treasure of immortality, which he is anxious to impart to guilty men. Insist fearlessly on the futility and vanity of all human methods of expiation, on the impotence of idols, and the command of God to *all men every where to repent, inasmuch as he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness.* Display the sufferings of Christ like one who was an eyewitness of those sufferings, and hold up the blood, the precious blood of atonement, as issuing warm from the cross. It is a peculiar excellence of the gospel, that in its wonderful adaptation to the state and condition of mankind as fallen creatures, it bears intrinsic marks of its divinity, and is supported not less by internal than by external evidence. By a powerful appeal to the conscience, by a faithful delineation of man in his grandeur and in his weakness, in his original capacity for happiness, and his present misery and guilt, present this branch of its evidence in all its force. Seize on every occasion those features of Christianity which render it interesting; and by awakening the fears and exciting the hopes of your hearers, endeavour to annihilate every other object, and make it appear what it really is, the pearl of great price, the sovereign balm, the cure of every ill, the antidote of death, the precursor of immortality. In such a ministry, fear not to give loose to all the ardour of your soul, to call into action every emotion and every faculty which can exalt or adorn it. You will find ample scope for all its force and tenderness; and should you be called to pour your life as a libation on the offering of the Gentiles, you will only have the more occasion to exult and rejoice.

In order to qualify yourself for the performance of these duties, it is above all things necessary for you to acquaint yourself with the genuine doctrines of Christianity in their full extent; but it will be neither necessary nor expedient to initiate your converts into those controversies which, through a long course of time, have grown up among Christians. Endeavour to acquire as extensive and perfect a knowledge as possible of the dictates of inspiration, and by establishing your hearers in these, preclude the entrance of error rather than confute it. Be always prepared to answer every modest inquiry into the grounds of your faith and practice; and that you may be more capable of entering into their difficulties and anticipating their objections, place yourself as much as possible in the situation of those whom you are called to instruct. When we consider the permanent consequences likely to result from first impressions on the minds of pagans, the few advantages they possess for religious discussion, and the extreme confidence they are likely to repose in their spiritual guides, you must be

conscious how important it is to *plant wholly a right seed.* Your detective representations of truth will not soon be supplied, nor the errors you plant extirpated, since we find societies of Christians in these parts of the world, where discussion and controversy abound, retain from generation to generation the distinguishing tenets of their leaders. In forming the plan and laying the foundation of an edifice which it is proposed shall last for ever, it is desirable that no materials should be admitted but such as are solid and durable, and no ornaments introduced but such as are chaste and noble. As it would be too much to expect you should perfectly succeed in imparting the mind of Christ, might I be permitted to advise, you will lean rather to the side of *defect* than *excess*, and in points of inferior magnitude omit what is true rather than inculcate what is doubtful; since the influence of religion on the heart depends not on the multiplicity, but on the quality of its objects.

The unnecessary multiplication of articles of faith gives a character of littleness to Christianity, and tends in no small degree to impress a similar character on its professors. The grandeur and efficacy of the gospel results, not from an immense accumulation of little things, but from its powerful exhibition of a few great ones. If you are determined to initiate your hearers into the subtleties and disputes which have prevailed in the Western world, I would recommend you, in imitation of the church of Rome, to dispense with the New Testament as the basis of instruction, and to betake yourself to the writings of the schoolmen; for that divine volume, rightly interpreted, supplies no aliment to a disputatious humour, which has never ceased, since it was first introduced, to be the scoff of infidels, and the plague of the church.

Among the indirect benefits which may be expected to arise from missions, we may be allowed to anticipate a more pure, simple, apostolical mode of presenting the gospel, which it may be doubted whether any of the various denominations under which the followers of Christ have been classed have exhibited precisely as he and his apostles taught it. In consequence of the collision of disputes, and the hostile aspect which rival sects bear to each other, they are scarcely in a situation to investigate truth with perfect impartiality. Few or none of them have derived their sentiments purely from the sacred oracles, as the result of independent inquiry; but almost universally from some distinguished leader, who at the commencement of the Reformation formed his faith, and planned his discipline, amid the heat and fury of theological combat. Terms have been invented for the purpose of excluding error, or more accurately defining the truth, to which the New Testament is a stranger, and on those terms associations and impressions ingrafted which, in some instances perhaps, little correspond with the divine simplicity of the gospel. It is far from my intention to insinuate that serious and fundamental errors may justly be imputed to the classes of Christians to whom I refer; I am fully convinced of the contrary:—but it may be worth while to inquire whether we have not all in our turn receded somewhat from the standard, if not by the adoption of positive error, yet by a disproportionate attention to some parts of revelation, to the neglect of

others equally important; in consequence of an undue partiality to our respective peculiarities.

The situation of a missionary retired from the scene of debate and controversy, who has continually before his eyes the objects which presented themselves to the attention of the apostles, is favourable to an emancipation from prejudice of every sort, and to the acquisition of just and enlarged conceptions of Christianity. It will be your lot to walk the same wards in this great hospital, and to prescribe to the same class of patients that first experienced the salutary and renovating power of the gospel. The gods which are worshipped at this time in India are supposed by Sir William Jones to be the very same, under different names, with those who shared the adoration of Italy and Greece when the gospel was first published in those regions; so that you will be an eyewitness of the very evils and enormities which then prevailed in the Western hemisphere, and which the sword of the Spirit so effectually subdued. You will be under great advantages for ascending to first principles—for tracing the stream to its head and spring, by having incessantly to contemplate that state of things in a moral view of which every page of Scripture assumes the existence, but of which the inhabitants of Europe have no living experience. It is with great satisfaction accordingly I have observed the harmony of doctrine, the identity of instruction which has pervaded the ministry of Protestant missionaries, who have been employed under the auspices of different denominations of Christians.

If to survey mankind in different situations, and under the influence of opposite institutions, civil and religious, tends to elevate the mind above vulgar prejudice, by none is this advantage more eminently possessed than by Christian missionaries. In addition to the advantages usually anticipated from foreign travel, their attention is directly turned to man in the most interesting light in which he can be viewed. An intelligent missionary, in consequence of daily conversing with the natives on the most momentous subjects, and at the most affecting moments, has opportunities of becoming acquainted, not merely with the surface of manners, but with the interior of the character, which can rarely fall to the lot of any other person; besides that Christianity, it may be justly affirmed, is the best decipherer of the human heart, and is that alone which can solve its contradictions and explain its anomalies. Hence it may be fairly expected, nor will the expectation disappoint us, that an experienced missionary, possessed of the talent and habit of observation, will, in every country, deserve to be classed among the most enlightened of its inhabitants.

Few things more powerfully tend to enlarge the mind than conversing with great objects and engaging in great pursuits. That the object you are pursuing is entitled to that appellation will not be questioned by him who reflects on the infinite advantages derived from Christianity to every nation and clime where it has prevailed in its purity, and that the prodigious superiority which Europe possesses over Asia and Africa is chiefly to be ascribed to this cause. It is the possession of a religion which comprehends the seeds of endless improvement, which maintains an incessant struggle with whatever is

barbarous, selfish, or inhuman; which, by unveiling futurity, clothes morality with the sanction of a divine law, and harmonizes utility and virtue in every combination of events, and in every stage of existence a religion which, by affording the most just and sublime conceptions of the Deity, and of the moral relations of man, has given birth at once to the loftiest speculation and the most child-like humility, uniting the inhabitants of the globe into one family, and in the bonds of a common salvation. It is this religion which, rising upon us like a finer sun, has quickened moral vegetation, and replenished Europe with talents, virtues, and exploits which, in spite of its physical disadvantages, have rendered it a paradise, the delight and wonder of the world. An attempt to propagate this religion among the natives of Hindostan may perhaps be stigmatized as visionary and romantic; but to enter the lists of controversy with those who would deny it to be great and noble would be a degradation to reason.*

On these principles the cause of missions has recently been sustained in parliament, and the propriety and expedience of attempting the propagation of Christianity in India demonstrated by arguments and considerations suited to the meridian of such assemblies. We feel ourselves highly indebted to those distinguished senators who exerted their eloquence on that occasion, and have no hesitation in asserting that a more wise and magnanimous measure was never adopted by an enlightened legislature than that of facilitating the communication of Christian knowledge to the subjects of our Eastern empire. As a political measure, nothing more unexceptionable or beneficial can be conceived. It is not in this light, however, we would wish you to regard your present undertaking. What may satisfy the views of a statesman ought not to satisfy a Christian minister. It is the business of the former to project for this world; of the latter for eternity. The former proposes to improve the advantages and to mitigate the evils of life; the latter, the conquest of death and the achievement of immortality. They proceed in the same direction, it is true, as far as they go; but the one proceeds infinitely farther than the other.

In the views of the most enlightened statesmen, compared to those

* It is impossible to read the strictures of the Edinburgh Review on Missions, in an article which appeared under that title, without surprise and indignation that such sentiments could find admission in a work which possesses such just claims to literary merit. The anonymous writer of the article alluded to, with the levity of a buffoon, joined to a heart of iron and a face of brass, has more than insinuated that the Christianity attempted to be promoted in India by the missionaries at Serampore would, were it adopted, prove a serious injury to the natives, and that they are much happier and more virtuous under their present institutions. The system of religion, be it remembered, which these men have attempted to introduce, and which this *Christian* reviewer loads with abuse, is precisely the same in its doctrinal articles with that of the Church of England, to which he has subscribed, *ex animo* no doubt, his unfeigned assent and consent. It may be hoped, that at a time when the Church of England is evincing a spirit of moderation and forbearance, and can boast of so many prelates and dignitaries distinguished for their piety and learning, no clergyman for the future will be allowed to degrade himself in a similar manner without the most indignan rebuke. It may possibly gratify certain spirits to see the dissenters and Methodists vilified and abused but they will do well to remember, that the indulgence of a profane and scoffing humour must be ultimately injurious, not only to Christianity, but to any Christian community whatever; and that to stab religion through the sides of fanaticism is a stale artifice of infidels, by which the simples can no longer be deceived. I sincerely hope the conductors of the Edinburgh Review have long been ashamed of the article in question. When I compare the intellectual power displayed in some articles of that publication with the extreme ignorance of religion evinced in others, I know not how better to characterize it than in the language of Virgil speaking of Polyphemus,—

"Monstrum horrendum *cui lumen ademptum.*"

of a Christian minister; there is a littleness and limitation which is not to be imputed in one case as a moral imperfection, nor in the other as a personal merit; the difference arising purely from the disparity in the subjects upon which they respectively speculate. Should you be asked, on your arrival in India, as it is very probable you will, what there is in Christianity which renders it so inestimable in your eyes, that you judged it fit to undertake so long, dangerous, and expensive a voyage for the purpose of imparting it,—you will answer, without hesitation, it is the power of God to salvation; nor will any view of it short of this, or the inculcation of it for any inferior purpose, enable it to produce even those moralizing and civilizing effects it is so powerfully adapted to accomplish. Christianity will civilize, it is true, but it is only when it is allowed to develop the energies by which it sanctifies. Christianity will inconceivably ameliorate the present condition of being,—who doubts it? Its universal prevalence, not in the name, but in reality, will convert this world into a semi-paradisiacal state; but it is only while it is permitted to prepare its inhabitants for a better. Let her be urged to forget her celestial origin and destiny, to forget that *she came from God, and returns to God;* and whether she is employed by the artful and enterprising, as the instrument of establishing a spiritual empire and dominion over mankind, or by the philanthropist as the means of promoting their civilization and improvement, she resents the foul indignity, claps her wings and takes her flight, leaving nothing but a base and sanctimonious hypocrisy in her room.

Preach it then, my dear brother, with a constant recollection that such is its character and aim. Preach it with a perpetual view to eternity, and with the simplicity and affection with which you would address your dearest friends, were they assembled round your dying bed. While others are ambitious to form the citizen of earth, be it yours to train him for heaven; to raise up the temple of God from among the ancient desolations; to contribute your part towards the formation and perfection of that eternal society which will flourish in inviolable purity and order, when all human associations shall be dissolved, and the princes of this world shall come to naught. In the pursuit of these objects, let it be your ambition to tread in the footsteps of a Brainerd and a Schwartz; I may add, of your excellent relative, with whom we are happy in perceiving you to possess a congeniality of character, not less than an affinity of blood.

But should you succeed beyond your utmost hope, expect not to escape the ridicule of the ungodly or the censure of the world; but be content to sustain that sort of reputation, and run that sort of career invariably allotted to the Christian missionary; where, agreeable to the experience of St. Paul, obscurity and notoriety, admiration and scorn, sorrows and consolations, attachments the most tender and opposition the most violent, are interchangeably mingled.

But whatever be the sentiments of the world, respecting which you will indulge no excessive solicitude, your name will be precious in India, your memory dear to multitudes, who will reverence in you the instrument of their eternal salvation; and how much more satisfactio

will accrue from the consciousness of this, than from the loudest human applause, your own reflections will determine. At that awful moment when you are called to bid a final adieu to the world, and to look into eternity,—when the hopes, fears, and agitations which sublunary objects shall have occasioned will subside like a feverish dream, or a vision of the night, the certainty of belonging to the number of the saved will be the only consolation; and when to this is joined the conviction of having contributed to enlarge that number, your joy will be full. You will be conscious of having conferred a benefit on your fellow-creatures, you know not precisely what, but of such a nature that it will require all the illumination of eternity to measure its dimensions and ascertain its value. Having followed Christ in the *regeneration*, in the preparatory labours accompanying the renovation of mankind, you will rise to an elevated station in a world where the scantiest portion is a *far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, and a conspicuous place will be assigned you in that unchanging firmament where those who have turned many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.

But it is time I should close this address, which has already been extended much further than was at first designed. On the necessity of maintaining an exemplary purity of conduct little or nothing has been said, because such is our confidence in your character that we deemed admonition of this kind superfluous. As you are, however, still in the body, and will be exposed to numerous temptations, you will feel the propriety of being jealous over yourself with a godly jealousy, and exerting a continual care and vigilance, lest, in the awful language of the apostle, *after preaching to others, you yourself should be a castaway*. I need not remind you, that as the society under whose auspices you are proceeding to India have on no occasion employed a missionary in whom they reposed more confidence, or of whom they formed more raised expectations, if you should become vain, worldly, sensual, indolent, and consequently useless, ours will not be an ordinary disappointment; we shall have fallen from a great hope. You will be sensible of the indispensable necessity of not interfering with the politics of India, nor of giving the smallest ground of umbrage and distrust to the constituted authorities, to whom it will be your duty not less than your interest to pay on all occasions, in return for the protection they will yield, the most respectful deference.

Let me also recommend you to listen to the advice, and be guided by the suggestions, as far as your conscience will permit, of your fathers in the mission, and of Dr. Carey in particular, whose wisdom and experience, to say nothing of his relationship to you, entitle him to reverential attention. You are now about to be removed from us, who it is probable shall see your face no more; but you will not be removed from the communion of saints, which no seas can divide, no distance impair, in which we shall often meet at a throne of grace, whence fervent prayers will ascend to the Father of mercies that he may keep you under his holy protection, and cause the richest of his blessings to descend *on the head of him who was separate from his brethren.*

A SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY

THE DEATH OF HER LATE ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE

PRINCESS CHARLOTTE OF WALES.

PREACHED AT

HERVEY LANE, LEICESTER,

NOVEMBER 6, 1817.

A SERMON.

JEREMIAH xv. 9.

She hath given up the ghost: her sun is gone down while it was yet day.

IT has been the approved practice of the most enlightened teachers of religion to watch for favourable occasions to impress the mind with the lessons of wisdom and piety; with a view to which they have been wont to advert to recent events of an interesting order, that, by striking in with a train of reflection already commenced, they might the more easily and forcibly insinuate the instruction it was their wish to convey. A sound discretion, it must be acknowledged, is requisite to make the selection. To descend to the details and occurrences of private life would seldom consist with the dignified decorum suited to religious assemblies: the events to which the attention is directed on such occasions should be of a nature somewhat extraordinary, and calculated to produce a deep and permanent impression. Admonition, imparted under such circumstances, is styled in Scripture a word in season, or, as it is emphatically expressed in the original, *a word on the wheels*, denoting the peculiar facility with which it makes its way to the heart.

In such a situation, the greatest difficulty a speaker has to surmount is already obviated; attention is awake, an interest is excited, and all that remains is to lead the mind, already sufficiently susceptible, to objects of permanent utility. He originates nothing; it is not so much he that speaks as the events which speak for themselves; he only presumes to interpret their language, and to guide the confused emotions of a sorrowful and swollen heart into the channels of piety

You are aware, my brethren, how strongly these observations apply to that most affecting occurrence which has recently spread such consternation through this great empire; an event which combines so many circumstances adapted to excite commiseration and concern, that not to survey it with attention, not to permit it to settle on the heart, would betray the utmost insensibility.

Devout attention to the dealings of Providence is equally consonant to the dictates of reason and of Scripture. He who believes in the superintendence of an eternal Mind over the affairs of the universe is equally irrational and indevout in neglecting to make the course of events the subject of frequent meditation; since the knowledge of God

is incomparably more important than the most intimate acquaintance with our fellow-creatures; and as the latter is chiefly acquired by an attentive observation of their conduct, so must the former be obtained in the same way. The operations of Providence are marked with a character as expressive of their great Author as the productions of human agency; and the same Being who speaks like himself in his word, acts like himself in the moral economy of the universe

However inferior in precision and extent the knowledge derived from the last of these sources, compared to the copious and satisfactory information afforded by the Scriptures, it will appear too important to be neglected, when it is considered that it is *antecedent*, and that supposing it is not sufficient of itself to evince the existence of a Deity, it is impossible for revelation to supply that defect. The word of God assumes the certainty of his being and attributes as a truth already sufficiently ascertained by the light of nature, while it proceeds to inform us on a multitude of subjects which elude the researches of finite reason. To us who have access to both these sources of information they serve to illustrate each other: the obscurities of Providence are elucidated by Scripture; the declarations of Scripture are verified by Providence. One unfolds, as far as it is suitable to our state, the character and designs of the mysterious agent; the other displays his works; and the admirable harmony which is found to subsist between them strengthens and invigorates our confidence in both.

Hence a disregard to the operations of the Deity in his provi dential dispensations is frequently stigmatized in Scripture as an unequivocal symptom of impiety. *Wo unto them*, says Isaiah, *that rise up early in the morning that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night till wine inflame them! and the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands. Therefore my people are gone into captivity because they have no knowledge.*"*

The striking analogy which the course of nature and Providence bears to the peculiar discoveries of revelation has been traced by an eminent prelate with a depth and precision which reflect honour on human nature.† It is not my intention to enter on this topic: let me only be permitted to remark that the analogy extends, not only to the discoveries themselves, but to the manner in which they are conveyed. In both a constant appeal is made to facts. A large portion of the Bible is devoted to history, where the grand truths which are taught are intimately incorporated with the narrative, and mingled with the character and transactions of living agents; by which they are rendered far more impressive than if they had remained in an abstract and didactic form.

How languid the impression produced by a bare statement of the doctrine of a particular Providence, for example, compared to that which we derive from the history of Abraham, whom we see conducted

* Isaiah, v. 11—3. † Bishop Butler.

from kingdom to kingdom by a divine hand, and instructed where to pitch his tent, and where to erect his altars. The wonderful evolutions in the story of Joseph also illustrate the conduct of him whose *ways are in the deep, and his paths past finding out*, in a manner far more powerful than the clearest instruction conveyed in general propositions.

When the Almighty was pleased to introduce, by the advent of the Messiah, a more perfect and permanent economy of religion, he founded it entirely on facts, attested by the most unexceptionable evidence, and the most splendid miracles. The apostles were *witnesses*, who by the signs and wonders they wrought made that appeal to the senses of men which had been previously made to their own; and the doctrines which they taught in their writings were little more than natural consequences resulting from the undoubted truth of their testimony. If they wish to inculcate the doctrine of a resurrection and future judgment, they deem it sufficient to appeal to the fact of Christ's resurrection and session at the right hand of God; they present no evidence of a future state except what ultimately terminates in the person of the Saviour as the first-begotten from the dead; and most anxiously warn us against resting our hope of salvation on any other basis than that of a sensible sacrifice, *the offering of the body of Christ once for all*. Thus, whatever is sublime and consolatory in the Christian religion originates in facts and events which appealed to the senses, and passed in this visible theatre; though their ultimate result is commensurate with eternity. In order to rescue us from the idolatry of the creature and the dominion of the senses, He who is intimately acquainted with our frame makes use of sensible appearances, and causes his Son to become flesh and to pitch his tent among us, that by faith in his crucified humanity we may ascend, as by a mystic ladder, to the abode of the Eternal.

Providence, it has already been remarked, conveys its most impressive lessons in the same shape; and by clothing the abstractions of religion in the realities of life, renders them in a manner palpable While they remain in the form of general truths, and are the objects of speculation, they affect us but little; they preserve us from the shallow sophistry of impiety, and conduct us to just conclusions on subjects of the last moment; but their control over the heart and conduct is scarcely felt. In order to be deeply impressed we require some object to be presented more in unison with the sensitive part of our nature—something more precise and limited—something which the mind may more distinctly realize, and the imagination more firmly grasp. The process of feeling widely differs in this respect from that of reasoning, and is regulated by opposite laws. In reasoning we recede as far as possible from sensible impressions; and the more general and comprehensive our conclusions and the larger our abstractions, provided they are sustained by sufficient evidence, the more knowledge is extended and the intellect improved. Sensibility is excited, the affections are awakened, on the contrary, on those occasions in which we tread back our steps, and, descending from gene

ralities, direct the attention to individual objects and particular events We all acknowledge, for example, our constant exposure to death, but it is seldom we experience the practical impression of that weighty truth, except when we witness the stroke of mortality actually inflicted. We universally acknowledge the uncertainty of human prospects, and the instability of earthly distinctions; but it is when we behold them signally destroyed and confounded that we feel our presumption checked, and our hearts appalled.

For this reason, He who spake as never man spake was wont to convey his instructions by sensible images and in familiar apologues, that, by concentrating the attention within the sphere of particular occurrences and individual objects, the impressions of his lessons might become more vivid and more profound.

It is thus that Providence is addressing us at the present moment and if we are wise we shall convert the melancholy event before us, not to the purposes of political speculation, fruitless conjecture, or anxious foreboding, but (what is infinitely better) to a profound consideration of the hand of God; and then, though we may be at a loss to explore the reason of his conduct, we shall be at none how to improve it.

Criminal as it is always not to mark the footsteps of Deity, the guilt of such neglect is greatly aggravated when he comes forth from his place to execute his judgments, and display his wrath; when he is pleased, as at present, to extinguish in an instant the hopes of a nation, to clothe the throne in sackcloth, and involve a kingdom in mourning. The greatness, the suddenness of this calamity, accompanied with circumstances of the most tender and affecting interest, speaks to the heart in accents which nothing but the utmost obduration can resist; so that were it the sole intention of Him who has inflicted it to awaken the careless and alarm the secure, among the higher orders especially, we are at a loss to perceive what could have been done more than has been accomplished. Whatever imagination can combine in an example of the uncertainty of life, the frailty of youth, the evanescence of beauty, and the nothingness of worldly greatness, in its highest state of elevation, is exhibited in this awful event in its full dimensions.

The first particular which strikes the attention in this solemn visitation is the rank of the illustrious personage, who appears to have been placed on the pinnacle of society for the express purpose of rendering her fall the more conspicuous, and of convincing as many as are susceptible of conviction that *man at his best estate is altogether vanity.* The Deity himself adorned the victim with his own hands, accumulating upon her all the decorations and ornaments best adapted to render her the object of universal admiration. He permitted her to touch whatever this sublunary scene presents that is most attractive and alluring, but to grasp nothing; and after conducting her to an eminence whence she could survey all the glories of empire as her destined possession, closed her eyes in death.

That such an event should affect us in a manner very superior to

similar calamities which occur in private life is agreeable to the order of nature and the will of God; nor is the profound sensation it has produced to be considered as the symbol of courtly adulation. The catastrophe itself, it is true, apart from its peculiar circumstances, is not a rare occurrence. Mothers often expire in the ineffectual effort to give birth to their offspring; both are consigned to the same tomb, and the survivor, after witnessing the wreck of so many hopes and joys, is left to mourn alone, *refusing to be comforted because they are not.* There is no sorrow which imagination can picture, no sign of anguish which nature agonized and oppressed can exhibit, no accent of wo but what is already familiar to the ear of fallen, afflicted humanity; and the roll which Ezekiel beheld flying through the heavens, inscribed within and without *with sorrow, lamentation, and wo,* enters sooner or later into every house, and discharges its contents in every bosom. But in the private departments of life the distressing incidents which occur are confined to a narrow circle. The hope of an individual is crushed, the happiness of a family is destroyed; but the social system is unimpaired, and its movements experience no impediment and sustain no sensible injury. The arrow passes through the air, which soon closes upon it, and all is tranquil. But when the great lights and ornaments of the world, placed aloft to conduct its inferior movements, are extinguished, such an event resembles the Apocalyptic vial poured into that element which changes its whole temperature, and is the presage of fearful commotions, of thunders, lightnings, and tempests.

Independently of the political consequences that may result from an event which, by changing the order of succession, involves the prospects of the nation in obscurity, we are formed to be peculiarly affected by the spectacle of prostrate majesty and fallen greatness. We are naturally prone to associate with the contemplation of exalted rank the idea of superior felicity. We perceive in persons of that station a command over the sources of enjoyment, a power of gratifying their inclinations in a multitude of forms from which others are precluded: and as they appear to possess the means of supplying every want, of obviating every inconvenience, and of alleviating to a considerable extent every sorrow incident to humanity, it is not to be wondered at that we regard them as the darlings of nature and the favourites of fortune. The share they possess of the bounties and indulgences of Providence is so much beyond the ordinary measure of allotment, and so large a portion of human art and industry is exerted in smoothing their passage and strewing flowers in their path, that we almost necessarily associate ideas of superior enjoyment with a description of persons for whose gratification the inferior classes seem born to toil.

We are so constituted also, that the sight of felicity, when it is not mixed with envy, is always connected with pleasing emotions, whether it is considered as possessed by ourselves or by others; not excepting even the animal creation. For who can behold their harmless pleasures, the wild gambols of their young, rioting in the superabundance

of life and excess of pleasure, without experiencing a momentary exhilaration? As their enjoyments are considered too scanty and limited to excite a feeling of envy, so, from an opposite cause, the privileges attached to an elevated station seldom produce it. Happily for mankind, the corrosions of that baleful passion are almost entirely confined to equals, or to those between whom there exists some pretensions to equality; who, having started from nearly the same level, have recently distanced each other in the chase of distinction or of glory. But when the superiority we contemplate has been long possessed, when it is such as renders competition hopeless and comparison absurd, the feelings of rivalry are superseded by an emotion of respect, and the spectacle presented of superior felicity produces its primary and natural effect. We dwell with complacency on a system of arrangements so exquisitely adapted apparently to the production of happiness, and yield a sort of involuntary homage to the person in whom it centres, without appearing to disturb our pretensions, or interfere with our pursuits. Hence, of all factitious distinctions, that of birth is least exposed to envy; the thought of aspiring to an equality in that respect being instantly checked by the idea of impossibility. When we turn our eyes towards the possessors of distinguished opulence and power, so many glittering appendages crowd on the imagination, productive of agreeable emotion, that we lose sight of the essential equality of the species, and think less of the persons themselves than of the artificial splendour which surrounds them.

That there is some illusion in these sentiments, that the balance in respect of real enjoyment is far from being so decidedly in favour of the opulent and the great as they prompt us to imagine, is an indubitable fact. Nevertheless, the disposition they create to regard the external appearances of opulence and power with respect unmingled with envy, and to acquiesce with pleasure in the visible superiority they confer, is productive of incalculable benefit. But for this, the distinctions of rank, and the privileges and immunities attached to each, on which much of the tranquillity and all the improvements of society depend, would fall a prey to an unfeeling rapacity; the many would hasten to seize on the exclusive advantages of the few; and the selfish passions, uncontrolled by a more refined order of feeling, would break forth with a fury that would quickly overwhelm the mounds and fences of legal authority. By means of the sentiments to which we have adverted society exerts a sort of plastic power over its members, which forms their habits and inclinations to a cheerful acquiescence in the allotments of Providence, and bestows on the positive institutions of man the stability of nature.

As the necessary consequence of these sentiments, when great reverses befall the higher orders, the mind experiences a kind of revulsion; the contrast of their present with their past situation produces a deeper sympathy than is experienced on other occasions. We measure the height from which they fell, and calculate the extent of their loss on a scale proportioned to the value we have been accustomed to attach to the immunities and enjoyments of which it deprives

them. The sight of such elaborate preparations for happiness rendered abortive, of a majestic fabric so proudly seated and exquisitely adorned suddenly overturned, disturbs the imagination like a convulsion of nature, and diffuses a feeling of insecurity and terror, as though nothing remained on which we could repose with confidence. Hence, the misfortunes of princes who have survived their greatness, and terminated a brilliant career by captivity and death, have been selected by poets in every age as the bases of those fictions which are invented for the purpose of producing commiseration.

To guard against these feelings being carried to excess, so as to induce an oblivion of moral distinction, a sacrifice of principle, a mean and pusillanimous prostration before the profligate and the vicious,—to urge the necessity of correcting their aberrations by the dictates of reason and religion, is foreign to our purpose. The utility of a class of feelings is not the less certain for their being liable to abuse. Let me rather avail myself of the awful dispensation before us, to suggest a warning to the possessors of these envied distinctions not to overrate their value, nor confide in their continuance, which at most are but *the flower of the field*, as much distinguished by its superior frailty as by its beauty. They belong to the *fashion of that world which passeth away;* they contribute much to embellish and beautify this transitory abode, to the ornament of which the Supreme Being has shown himself not inattentive. As the God of order, whatever tends to secure and perpetuate it is the object of his approbation; nor can we doubt that he regards with complacency that distribution of men into distinct orders which assimilates the social system to that variety which pervades the economy of nature.

Let their possessors remember, however, that they must shortly be divested of the brilliant appendages and splendid ornaments of rank and station, and enter into a world where they are unknown; where they will carry nothing but the essential elements of their being, impressed with those indelible characters which must sustain the scrutiny of Omniscience. These artificial decorations, be it remembered, are not, properly speaking, their own; the elevation to which they belong is momentary; and as the merit of an actor is not estimated by the part which he performs, but solely by the truth and propriety of his representation, and the peasant is often applauded where the monarch is hissed, so when the great drama of life is concluded, He who allots its scenes, and determines its period, will take an account of his servants, and assign to each his punishment or reward, in his proper character. The existence of a perfect and eternal Mind renders such an order of things necessary; for with whatever skill society may be organized, still it will make but a faint approximation to our limited conceptions of justice; and since there is an original mind in which these ideas subsist in their utmost perfection, whence the finite conception of justice is transcribed, they must at some period or other be realized. That they are not so at present is obvious. Merit is often depressed, vice exalted; and with the best regulations of human wisdom, executed with the utmost impartiality, malevolence will ever be

armed with the power of inflicting a thousand nameless indignities and oppressions with perfect impunity. Though the efficacy of human laws is far more conspicuous in restraining and punishing than in rewarding, in which their resources are extremely limited, it is only those flagrant offences that disturb the public tranquillity to which they extend; while the silent stream of misery issuing from private vice, which is incessantly impairing the foundations of public and individual happiness by a secret and invisible sap, remains unchecked. The gradations even of rank, which are partly the cause and partly the effect of the highest social improvements, are accompanied with so many incidental evils, that nothing but an enlarged contemplation of their ultimate tendency and effect could reconcile us to the monstrous incongruities and deformities they display, in wealth which ruins its possessor, titles which dignify the base, and influence exerted to none but the most mischievous purposes. The enlightened observer of human affairs is often struck with horror at the consequences incidentally resulting from laws and institutions which, on account of their general utility, command his unfeigned veneration. These are the unequivocal indications of a fallen state; but since it is also a state of probation, the irregularities by which it is distinguished, in the frequent exaltation of the wicked and the humiliation and depression of the righteous, are such as furnish the fittest materials for trial. What state, let me ask, is better calculated than the present to put it to the test whether we will suffer ourselves to be swayed by the dictates of reason or the fascinations of pleasure; whether we will allow the future to predominate over the present, the things that are invisible over those that are seen; and, preferring an eternal recompense with God to the transitory objects of concupiscence, submit to be controlled by his will, and led by his spirit.

Whatever reception these views may meet with, one thing is certain, that it is invariably the most necessary they should be inculcated where they are the most unwelcome; and that if there be any one description of persons more in danger than another of being lulled into a forgetfulness of future prospects, it is to them especially the warning voice should be directed, the eternal world unveiled. And who but will acknowledge that this danger is especially incident to such as bask in the smiles of fortune, and, possessing an unlimited command over the sources of enjoyment, are bound to the world by the most vivid associations of pleasure and of hope? *Give me neither poverty nor riches*, said one of the wisest of men, *lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or, lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of God in vain.* While riches exempt their possessors from the temptation of meaner vices, his observation taught him their peculiar exposure to practical impiety, and to that forgetfulness of God which is the root and core of all our disorders.

Let them turn their eyes, then, for a moment, to this illustrious princess; who, while she lived, concentred in herself whatever distinguishes the higher orders of society, and may now be considered as addressing them from the tomb.

Born to inherit the most illustrious monarchy in the world, and united at an early period to the object of her choice, whose virtues amply justified her preference, she enjoyed (what is not always the privilege of that rank) the highest connubial felicity, and had the prospect of combining all the tranquil enjoyments of private life with the splendour of a royal station. Placed on the summit of society, to her every eye was turned, in her every hope was centred, and nothing was wanting to complete her felicity except perpetuity. To a grandeur of mind suited to her royal birth and lofty destination, she joined an exquisite taste for the beauties of nature and the charms of retirement; where, far from the gaze of the multitude and the frivolous agitations of fashionable life, she employed her hours in visiting, with her distinguished consort, the cottages of the poor, in improving her virtues, in perfecting her reason, and acquiring the knowledge best adapted to qualify her for the possession of power and the cares of empire. One thing only was wanting to render our satisfaction complete in the prospect of the accession of such a princess; it was, that she might become the living mother of children.

The long wished-for moment at length arrived: but alas! the event anticipated with such eagerness will form the most melancholy part of our history.

It is no reflection on this amiable princess to suppose, that in her early dawn, with the *dew of her youth* so fresh upon her, she anticipated a long series of years, and expected to be led through successive scenes of enchantment, rising above each other in fascination and beauty. It is natural to suppose she identified herself with this great nation which she was born to govern; and that while she contemplated its pre-eminent lustre in arts and in arms, its commerce encircling the globe, its colonies diffused through both hemispheres, and the beneficial effects of its institutions extending to the whole earth, she considered them as so many component parts of her grandeur. Her heart, we may well conceive, would often be ruffled with emotions of trembling ecstasy when she reflected that it was her province to live entirely for others, to compose the felicity of a great people, to move in a sphere which would afford scope for the exercise of philanthropy the most enlarged, of wisdom the most enlightened; and that, while others are doomed to pass through the world in obscurity, she was to supply the materials of history, and to impart that impulse to society which was to decide the destiny of future generations. Fired with the ambition of equalling or surpassing the most distinguished of her predecessors, she probably did not despair of reviving the remembrance of the brightest parts of their story, and of once more attaching the epoch of British glory to the annals of a female reign. It is needless to add that the nation went with her, and probably outstripped her in these delightful anticipations. We fondly hoped that a life so inestimable would be protracted to a distant period, and that, after diffusing the blessings of a just and enlightened administration, and being surrounded by a numerous progeny, she would gradually, in a good old age, sink under the horizon, amid the embraces of her family and the

benedictions of her country. But alas! these delightful visions are fled, and what do we behold in their room but the funeral pall and shroud, a palace in mourning, a nation in tears, and the shadow of death settled over both like a cloud! O the unspeakable vanity of human hopes! the incurable blindness of man to futurity! ever doomed to grasp at shadows, to seize with avidity what turns to dust and ashes in his hands, *to sow the wind and reap the whirlwind.*

How must the heart of the royal parent be torn with anguish on this occasion; deprived of a daughter who combined every quality suited to engage his affection and elevate his hopes; an only child, the heir of his throne; and doomed, apparently, to behold the sceptre pass from his posterity into other hands; his sorrow must be such as words are inadequate to portray. Nor is it possible to withhold our tender sympathy from the unhappy mother, who, in addition to the wounds she has received by the loss of her nearest relations, and by still more trying vicissitudes, has witnessed the extinction of her last hope, in the sudden removal of one in whose bosom she might naturally hope to repose her griefs, and find a peaceful haven from the storms of life and the tossings of the ocean. But above all, the illustrious consort of this lamented princess is entitled to the deepest commiseration. How mysterious are the ways of Providence in rendering the virtues of this distinguished personage the source of his greatest trials! By these he merited the distinction to which monarchs aspired in vain, and by these he exposed himself to a reverse of fortune, the severity of which can only be adequately estimated by this illustrious mourner. These virtues, however, will not be permitted to lose their reward. They will find it in the grateful attachment of the British nation, in the remembrance of his having contributed the principal share to the happiness of the most amiable and exalted of women; and, above all, we humbly hope, when the agitations of time shall cease, in a reunion with the object of his attachment before the presence of Him who will *wipe every tear from the eye.*

When Jehovah was pleased to command Isaiah the prophet to make a public proclamation in the ears of the people, what was it think you he was ordered to announce? Was it some profound secret of nature which had baffled the inquiries of philosophers, or some great political convulsion which was to change the destiny of empires? No: these were not the sort of communications most suited to the grandeur of his nature or the exigencies of ours. *The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.*"* Instead of presenting to our eyes the mutations of power and the revolutions of states and kingdoms, he exhibits a more awful and affecting spectacle—the human race itself withering under the breath of his mouth, perishing under his rebuke; while he plants

* Isaiah xl. 6,—8.

his eternal word, which subsists from generation to generation, in undecaying vigour, to console our wretchedness and impregnate the dying mass with the seed of immortality. As the frailty of man and the perpetuity of *his* promises, are the greatest contrast the universe presents, so the practical impression of this truth, however obvious, is the beginning of wisdom, nor is there a degree of moral elevation to which it will not infallibly conduct us.

The annunciation of life and immortality by the gospel, did it contain no other truth, were sufficient to cast all the discoveries of science into shade, and to reduce the highest improvements of reason to the comparative nothingness which the flight of a moment bears to eternity.

By this discovery, the prospects of human nature are infinitely widened, the creature of yesterday becomes the child of eternity; and as felicity is not the less valuable in the eye of reason because it is remote, nor the misery which is certain less to be deprecated because it is not immediately felt, the care of our future interests becomes our chief, and, properly speaking, our only concern. All besides will shortly be nothing; and therefore, whenever it comes into competition with these, it is as the small dust of the balance.

Is it now any subject of regret, think you, to this amiable princess, so suddenly removed, *that her sun went down while it was yet day?*—or that, prematurely snatched from prospects the most brilliant and enchanting, she was compelled to close her eyes so soon on a world of whose grandeur she formed so conspicuous a part? No: other objects occupy her mind, other thoughts engage her attention, and will continue to engage it for ever. All things with her are changed; and viewed from that pure and ineffable light for which we humbly hope religion prepared her, the lustre of a diadem is scarcely visible, majesty emits a feeble and sickly ray, and all ranks and conditions of men appear but so many troops of pilgrims, in different garbs, toiling through the same vale of tears, distinguished only by different degrees of wretchedness.

In the full fruition of eternal joys, she is so far from looking back with lingering regret on what she has quitted, that she is surprised it had the power of affecting her so much; that she took so deep an interest in the scenes of this shadowy state of being, while so near to an *eternal weight of glory;* and, as far as memory may be supposed to contribute to her happiness by associating the present with the past, it is not the recollection of her illustrious birth and elevated prospects, but that she visited the abodes of the poor, and learned to weep with those that weep; that, surrounded with the fascinations of pleasure, she was not inebriated by its charms; that she resisted the strongest temptations to pride, preserved her ears open to truth, was impatient of the voice of flattery; in a word, that she sought and cherished the inspirations of piety, and *walked humbly with her God.** This is fruit which survives when the flower withers—the only ornaments and treasures we can carry into eternity.

* From the obscurity of the author's situation, he must be supposed incapable of authenticating these traits in her character from his personal knowledge; but from the respectable publications in which they are related, he entertains no doubt of their truth.

While we look at this event with the eyes of flesh, and survey it in the aspect it bears towards our national prospects, it appears a most singular and affecting catastrophe. But considered in itself, or, more properly, in its relation to a certain though invisible futurity, its consequences are but commensurate to those which result from the removal of the meanest individual. He whose death is as little regarded as the fall of a leaf in the forest, and he whose departure involves a nation in despair, are, in this view of the subject (by far the most important one), upon a level. Before the presence of the great I AM, into which they both immediately enter, these distinctions vanish, and the true statement of the fact, on either supposition, is, that an immortal spirit has finished its earthly career,—has passed the barriers of the invisible world to appear before its Maker, in order to receive that sentence which will fix its irrevocable doom *according to the deeds done in the body*. On either supposition, an event has taken place which has no parallel in the revolutions of time, the consequences of which have not room to expand themselves within a narrower sphere than an endless duration. An event has occurred, the issues of which must ever baffle and elude all finite comprehensions, by concealing themselves in the depths of that abyss, of that eternity, which is the dwelling-place of Deity, where there is sufficient space for the destiny of each, among the innumerable millions of the human race, to develop itself, and without interference or confusion to sustain and carry forward its separate infinity of interest.

That there is nothing hyperbolic or extravagant in these conceptions, but that they are the *true sayings of God*, you may learn from almost every page of the sacred oracles. For what are they, in fact, but a different mode of announcing the doctrine taught us in the following words:—*What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or what shall he give in exchange for his soul?*

When it is considered that the doctrine of a life to come is ascertained by the advent of the Messiah, with a degree of evidence so superior to that which attaches to any other futurity, that he who refuses to believe it on his testimony would not be persuaded although one rose from the dead, the propensity to disregard it, however general, is the most astonishing phenomenon in nature. Man is naturally a prospective creature, endowed not only with a capacity of comparing the present with the past, but also of anticipating the future, and dwelling with anxious rumination on scenes which are yet remote. He is capable of carrying his views, of attaching his anxieties to a period much more distant than that which measures the limits of his present existence; capable, we distinctly perceive, of plunging into the depths of future duration, of identifying himself with the sentiments and opinions of a distant age, and of enjoying, by anticipation, the fame of which he is aware he shall never be conscious and the praises he shall never hear. So strongly is he disposed to link his feelings with futurity, that shadows become realities, when contemplated as subsisting there; and the phantom of posthumous celebrity, the faint image of his being impressed on future generations, is often preferred

to the whole of his present existence, with all its warm and vivid realities. The complexion of the day that is passing over him is determined by the anticipations of the morrow: the present borrows its brightness and its gloom from the future, which, presenting itself to his contemplation as in a mirror, incessantly agitates him with apparitions of terror or delight. In the calculations of interest, the mind is affected in the same manner; it is perpetuity which stamps its value on whatever we possess, so that the lowest epicure would prefer a small accession to his property to the most exquisite repast; and none are found so careless of futurity as not to prefer the inheritance he may bequeath to one of equal value the title to which expires with his life.

How is it then that we find it so difficult to prevail upon men to fix their attention firmly on another world, that real future existence which reason assures us is probable, which revelation teaches us is certain, which is separated from us by so narrow a boundary, and into which thousands of our fellow-creatures are passing every moment? How is it that the professed followers of Him especially who descended from heaven, who *came forth from the Father* to conduct us thither, are so indisposed to turn their thoughts and contemplations to that unchanging state of being into which they are so shortly to enter? It is not, we perceive, that to move forward is not congenial with our mental constitution: it is not because we are so enchanted with the present scene as to be incapable of diverting our attention from it; for we are continually disquieted by a restless desire of something future: it is not because we are seldom warned or reminded of another state of existence; for every funeral bell, every opening grave, every symptom of decay within and of change without us is a separate warning, to say nothing of the present most affecting dispensation which has filled this nation with such consternation and distress.

Were any other event of far inferior moment ascertained by evidence which made but a distant approach to that which attests the certainty of a life to come,—had we equal assurance that after a very limited though uncertain period we should be called to migrate into a distant land whence we were never to return, the intelligence would fill every breast with solicitude; it would become the theme of every tongue; and we should avail ourselves with the utmost eagerness of all the means of information respecting the prospects which awaited us in that unknown country. Much of our attention would be occupied in preparing for our departure; we should cease to regard the place we now inhabit as our home, and nothing would be considered of moment but as it bore upon our future destination. How strange is it then that, with the certainty we all possess of shortly entering into another world, we avert our eyes as much as possible from the prospect; that we seldom permit it to penetrate us; and that the moment the recollection recurs we hasten to dismiss it as an unwelcome intrusion! Is it not surprising, that the volume we profess to recognise as the record of immortality, and the sole depository of whatever information it is possible to obtain respecting the portion which awaits us, should be consigned to neglect, and rarely if ever consulted with the serious intention of ascertaining our future condition?

That a creature formed for an endless duration should be disposed to turn his attention from that object, and to contract his views and prospects within a circle which, compared to eternity, is but a mathematical point, is truly astonishing; and as it is impossible to account for it from the natural constitution of the mind, it must originate in some great *moral* cause. It shows that some strange catastrophe has befallen the species; that some deep and radical malady is inherent in the moral system. Though philosophers of a certain description may attempt to explain and justify it on some ingenious hypothesis, yet, in spite of metaphysical subtleties, the alarming inquiry will still return—how is it that the disposition of mankind is so much at variance with their prospects?—that no train of reflections is more unwelcome than that which is connected with their eternal home? If the change is considered as a happy one,—if the final abode to which we are hastening is supposed to be an improvement on the present, why shrink back from it with aversion? If it is contemplated as a state of suffering, it is natural to inquire what it is that has invested it with so dark and sombre a character. What is it which has enveloped that species of futurities in a gloom which pervades no other? If the indisposition to realize a life to come arises in any measure from a vague presentiment that it will bring us, so to speak, into a closer contact with the Deity, by presenting clearer manifestations of his character and perfections, (and who can doubt that this is a principal cause?) the proof it affords of a great deterioration in our moral condition is complete. For who will suppose it possible a disposition to hide himself from his Creator should be an original part of the constitution of a reasonable creature?—or what more portentous and unnatural, than for him that is formed to shun the presence of his Maker, and to place his felicity in the forgetfulness of Him *in whom he lives, and moves, and has his being?* If he is pained and disquieted whenever he is forcibly reminded of Him whose power sustains and whose bounty replenishes the universe with whatever is good and fair; if the source of being and of happiness is the object of terror instead of confidence and love, it is not easy to conceive what can afford a stronger conviction of guilt, or a more certain presage of danger.

The conclusion to which we are conducted is confirmed by inspiration, which assures us that a great revolution has actually befallen the species; and that, in consequence of the entrance of sin into the world, we have incurred the forfeiture of the divine favour, and the loss of the divine image. In this situation it is not difficult to perceive that the economy adapted to our relief must include two things, the means of expiating guilt, and the means of moral renovation: in other words, an atoning sacrifice and a sanctifying Spirit. Both these objects are accomplished in the advent of the Saviour, who, by presenting himself as a sin-offering, has made ample satisfaction to offended justice, and purchased by his merits the renovating Spirit which is freely offered to as many as sincerely seek it. By the former, the obstructions to our happiness arising from the divine nature are removed; by the latter, the disqualification springing from our own. By providing a

sacrifice of infinite value in the person of the Only-begotten, he has consulted his majesty as the righteous Governor of the world, and has reconciled the seemingly incompatible claims of justice and of mercy. By bestowing the Spirit as the fruit of *his* mediation and intercession whose *soul was made an offering for sin*, pollution is purged, and that image of God restored to sinful creatures which capacitates them for the enjoyment of pure and perfect felicity. Thus every requisite which we can conceive necessary in a restorative dispensation is found in the gospel, exhibited with a perspicuity level to the meanest capacity, combined with such a depth in the contrivance, and such an exquisite adaptation to our state and condition, as surpasses finite comprehension. This is the substance of those glad tidings which constitute the *gospel;* to the cordial reception of which must all the difference be ascribed which will shortly be found between the condition of the saved and the lost.

Be assured, my Christian brethren, it is by a profound submission of the soul to this doctrine, offensive as it may be to the pride of human virtue, repugnant as it undoubtedly is to the dictates of philosophy, falsely so called, that we must *acquaint ourselves with God, and be at peace.* When we mention peace, however, we mean not the stupid security of a mind that refuses to reflect, we mean a tranquillity which rests upon an unshaken basis, which no anticipations, however remote, no power of reflection, however piercing or profound, no evolutions which time may disclose or eternity conceal, are capable of impairing; a peace which is founded on the oath and promise of Him who cannot lie; which, springing from the consciousness of an ineffable alliance with the Father of spirits, makes us to share in his fulness, to become a partner with him in his eternity; a repose, pure and serene as the unruffled wave, which reflects the heavens from its bosom, while it is accompanied with a feeling of exultation and triumph, natural to such as are conscious that ere long, having overcome, they shall possess all things.

While the prize is so transcendently great, no unparalleled efforts, no incredible exertions are requisite to obtain it; it is placed within the grasp of every hand. If the great sacrifice had not been presented, if the succours of heaven had not been offered, if the glad tidings had not been proclaimed, nor life and immortality brought to light, our condition would indeed have been deplorable; and little encouragement should we have had to engage in the great work of seeking salvation. But now *all things are ready*, and the chief, or rather the only prerequisite is a child-like docility, a disposition to derive wisdom from the fountain of light, strength from the strong, together with a fixed and immoveable conviction that the care of our eternal interests is the grand concern.

Some events by the established course of nature are rendered so certain, that, however important in their consequences, they are not the proper subjects of deliberation. Their certainty, assumed as a basis in all our calculations and reasonings, is entitled to great weight in adjusting the plan of future operation; but it is with a view to other

objects that our schemes are formed and our anxiety exerted. Other events are precluded from deliberation by an opposite reason, the perfect conviction that they will never arrive. Both these are regarded by wise men as fixed, immoveable points, which supply motives for submission, but no incentives to exertion.

There is another class of futurities whose existence is not ascertained by immutable, independent causes; they are placed in some measure within our reach, are subjected in a degree to our control, and are neither so certain as to produce security, nor so impossible or improbable as to occasion despair. These form the motives to human activity, and the objects of rational pursuit; in the proper selection of which, and the application of means best adapted to their attainment, consists the whole wisdom of man. The hopes and fears associated with the contemplation of events of this nature are the springs which set mankind in motion; and while the frivolous and the dissipated fix their attention on such as are productive of transient and momentary impressions, the wise in their generation select those which are the basis of permanent interests, such as wealth, power, and reputation; which, whoever acquires by a course of strenuous exertion, is applauded and extolled as a pattern for universal imitation. Yet, what extreme short-sightedness characterizes the most prosperous votary of the world, compared to the humblest candidate for immortality! *This their way is their folly, though their posterity approve their sayings.* Of the great prizes in human life, it is not often the lot of the most enterprising to obtain many: they are placed on opposite sides of the path, so that it is impossible to approach one of them without proportionably receding from another; whence it results that the wisest plans are founded on a compromise between good and evil, where much that is the object of desire is finally relinquished and abandoned in order to secure superior advantages. The candidate for immortality is reduced to no such alternative: the possession of his object comprehends all: it combines in itself, without imperfection and without alloy, all the scattered portions of good for which the votaries of the world are accustomed to contend. Such also is our constitution, and so little is the sublunary state adapted to be our rest, that we are usually more alive to the good we want than to that which we possess; that, rendered delicate by indulgence rather than satiated by enjoyment, the slightest check in the career of our desires inflicts a wound which their gratification in every other particular is incapable of healing. Thus the wretched Haman, in the highest plenitude of affluence and power, exclaimed, *All this availeth me nothing, while Mordecai sits in the gate.* Such is the capricious fastidiousness of the human heart, chiefly in those who are most pampered with the gifts of fortune, that the person whom nothing has the power of gratifying long the merest trifle is sufficient to displease, and that he is often extremely chagrined and disquieted by the absence of that whose presence would scarcely be felt. The fruition of religious objects calms and purifies as much as it delights; it strengthens instead of enervating the mind, which it fills without agitating, and, by settling it

on its proper basis, diffuses an unspeakable repose through all its powers.

As the connexion between means and ends is not so indissolubly fixed as to preclude the possibility of disappointment, and *the battle is not always to the strong, nor the race to the swift, nor riches to men of understanding*, the votary of the world is never secure of his object, which frequently mocks his pursuit, by vanishing at the moment when he is just on the point of seizing it. He often possesses not even the privilege of failing with impunity, and has no medium left between complete success and infallible destruction. In the struggles of ambition, in violent competitions for power or for glory, how slender the partition between the widest extremes of fortune, and how few the steps and apparently slight the circumstances which sever the throne from the prison, the palace from the tomb? *So Tibni died*, says the sacred historian, with inimitable simplicity, *and Omri reigned.* He who makes the care of his eternal interests his chief pursuit is exposed to no such perils and vicissitudes. His hopes will be infallibly crowned with success. The soil on which he bestows his labour will infinitely more than recompense his care; and however disproportioned the extent and duration of his efforts to the magnitude of their object, however insufficient to secure it by their intrinsic vigour, the faithfulness of God is pledged to bring them to a prosperous issue. *Ask*, said our Lord, *and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For whosoever asketh receiveth; and whosoever seeketh findeth; and whosoever knocketh, to him it shall be opened.* The pursuit of salvation is the only enterprise in which no one fails from weakness, none from an invincible ignorance of futurity none from the sudden vicissitudes of fortune, against which there exists no effectual security, none from those occasional eclipses of knowledge and fits of inadvertence to which the most acute and wakeful intellect is exposed. How suitable is it to the character of the Being who reveals himself by the name of *Love*, to render the object which is alone worthy of being aspired to with ardour the only one to which all may, without presumption, aspire; and while he conceals thrones and sceptres in the shadow of his hand, and bestows them where he pleases, with a mysterious and uncontrollable sovereignty, on opening the springs of eternal felicity, to proclaim to the utmost bounds of the earth, *Let him that is athirst come: and whomsoever will, let him partake of the water of life freely.*

But the impotence of the world never appears more conspicuous than when it has exhausted its powers in the gratification of its votaries, by placing them in a situation which leaves them nothing further to hope. It frustrates the sanguine expectations of its admirers, as much by what it bestows as by what it withholds, and reserves its severest disappointment for the season of possession. The agitation, the uncertainty, the varied emotions of hope and fear which accompany the pursuit of worldly objects, create a powerful interest, and maintain a brisk and wholesome circulation; but when the pursuit is over, unless some other is substituted in its place, satiety succeeds to enjoyment,

and pleasure cease to please. Tired of treading the same circle, of beholding the same spectacles, of frequenting the same amusements and repeating the same follies, with nothing to awaken sensibility, or to stimulate to action, the minion of fortune is exposed to an insuperable languor; he sinks under an insupportable weight of ease, and falls a victim to incurable dejection and despondency. Religion, by presenting objects ever interesting and ever new, by bestowing much, by promising more, and dilating the heart with the expectation of a certain *indefinite* good, clearly ascertained though indistinctly seen, the pledge and earnest of which is far more delightful than all that irreligious men possess, is the only effectual antidote to this evil. *He that drinketh of this water shall never thirst.* The vanity which adheres to the world in every form, when its pleasures and occupations are regarded as *ultimate objects*, is at once corrected when they are viewed in connexion with a boundless futurity; and whatever may be their intrinsic value, they rise into dignity and importance when considered as the seed of a future harvest, as the path which, however obscure, leads to honour and immortality, as the province of labour allotted us, in order to *work out our salvation with fear and trembling.* Nothing is little which is related to such a system; nothing vain or frivolous which has the remotest influence on such prospects. Considered as a state of probation, our present condition loses all its inherent meanness; it derives a moral grandeur even from the shortness of its duration, when viewed as a contest for an immortal crown, in which the candidates are exhibited on a theatre, a spectacle to beings of the highest order, who, conscious of the tremendous importance of the issue, of the magnitude of the interest at stake, survey the combatants from on high with benevolent and trembling solicitude.

Finally, we are *made* for the enjoyment of eternal blessedness; it is our high calling and destination; and not to pursue it with diligence is to be guilty of the blackest ingratitude to the Author of our being, as well as the greatest cruelty to ourselves. To fail of such an object, to defeat the end of our existence, and in consequence of neglecting the great salvation, to sink at last under the frown of the Almighty, is a calamity which words were not invented to express, nor finite minds formed to grasp. Eternity, it is surely not necessary to remind you, invests every state, whether of bliss or of suffering, with a mysterious and awful importance, entirely its own, and is the only property in the creation which gives that weight and moment to whatever it attaches, compared to which all sublunary joys and sorrows, all interests which know a period, fade into the most contemptible insignificance. In appreciating every other object, it is easy to exceed the proper estimate; and even of the distressing event which has so recently occurred, the feeling which many of us possess is probably adequate to the occasion. The nation has certainly not been wanting in the proper expression of its poignant regret at the sudden removal of this most lamented princess, nor of their sympathy with the royal family, deprived by this visitation of its brightest ornament. Sorrow is painted in every countenance, the pursuits of business and of pleasure have

been suspended, and the kingdom is covered with the signals of distress. But what, my brethren, if it be lawful to indulge such a thought, what would be the funeral obsequies of a lost soul? Where shall we find the tears fit to be wept at such a spectacle? or, could we realize the calamity in all its extent, what tokens of commiseration and concern would be deemed equal to the occasion? Would it suffice for the sun to veil his light and the moon her brightness; to cover the ocean with mourning, and the heavens with sackcloth? or, were the whole fabric of nature to become animated and vocal, would it be possible for her to utter a groan too deep, or a cry too piercing, to express the magnitude and extent of such a catastrophe?

But it is time to draw the veil over this heart-withering prospect remembering only *what manner of persons we ought to be*, who are walking on the brink of such an eternity, and possess no assurance but that the next moment will convey us to the regions of happiness or of despair. Impressed habitually with this solemn recollection, we shall *rejoice as those who rejoice not, we shall weep as those who weep not, we shall use the world as not abusing it, remembering that the end of all things is at hand.*

It is scarcely to be supposed that so remarkable an example of the frailty and uncertainty of life as the recent providence has displayed, has failed of impressing serious reflection on the minds of multitudes: it is difficult to conceive of that degree of insensibility which could totally resist such a warning. But there is reason to fear that in a great majority of instances it has produced no salutary fruit, and will leave them, after a very short period, as careless and unconcerned about a preparation for a hereafter as before; like the unthinking feathered tribe, who, when one of the number falls by the hand of the fowler, are scared for a moment and fly from the fatal spot with screams of horror; but quickly recovering their confidence alight again on the same place, and expose themselves to the same danger. Thus many, whose gayety has been eclipsed, and whose thoughtless career of irreligion and dissipation has experienced a momentary check, will doubtless soon return with eager impetuosity to the same course, as *the horse rusheth into the battle.* The same amusements will enchant, the same society corrupt, and the same temptations ensnare them; with this very important difference, that the effort necessary to surmount the present impression will superinduce a fresh degree of obduration, by which they will become more completely accoutred in the panoply of darkness. The next visitation, though it may be in some respects more affecting, because more near, will probably impress them less; and as death has penetrated the palace in vain, though it should even come up into their chamber and take away the delight of their eyes at a stroke, they will be less religiously moved.

What may we suppose is the reason of this; why are so many impressed and so few profited? It is unquestionably because they are not obedient to the *first* suggestion of conscience. What that suggestion is it may not be easy precisely to determine; but it certainly is *not* to make haste to efface the impression by frivolous amusement, by

gay society, by entertaining reading, or even by secular employment. it is probably to meditate and pray. Let the first whisper, be it what it may, of the internal monitor be listened to as an oracle, as the still small voice which Elijah heard when he wrapped his face in his mantle, recognising it to be the voice of God. Be assured it will not mislead you; it will conduct you one step at least towards happiness and truth; and by a prompt and punctual compliance with it, you will be prepared to receive ampler communications and superior light. If, after a serious retrospect of your past lives, of the objects you have pursued, and the principles which have determined your conduct, they appear to be such as will ill sustain the scrutiny of a dying hour, dare to be faithful to yourselves, and shun with horror that cruel treachery to your best interests, which would impel you to sacrifice the happiness of eternity to the quiet of a moment. Let the light of truth, which is the light of heaven, however painful for the present, be admitted in its full force; and whatever secrets it may discover *in the chambers of imagery*, while it unveils *still greater and greater abominations*, shrink not from the view, but entreat rather the assistance of Him whose prerogative it is to search the heart and to try the reins, to render the investigation more profound and impartial. The sight of a penitent on his knees is a spectacle which moves heaven; and the compassionate Redeemer, who, when he beheld Saul in that situation, exclaimed, *Behold, he prayeth*, will not be slow or reluctant to strengthen you by his might, and console you by his Spirit. When a *new and living way* is opened *into the holiest of all*, by the blood of Jesus, not to avail ourselves of it, not to arise and go to our Father, but to prefer remaining at a guilty distance, encompassed with famine, to the rich and everlasting provisions of his house, will be a source of insupportable anguish when we shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob enter into the kingdom of God, and ourselves shut out. You are probably not aware of what importance it is to improve these sacred visitations; have not considered that they form a crisis which, if often neglected, will never return. It is impossible too often to inculcate the momentous truth, that the character is not formed by passive impressions, but by voluntary actions, and that we shall be judged hereafter, not by what we have felt, but by what we have done.

You will perceive, my brethren, that I have confined my attention, in this discourse, to such reflections as we would wish every individual to indulge in the contemplation of this great national calamity, without adverting to its aspect on the political prospects and interests of the country. The discussion of the subject in that view of it is equally unsuited to my province and to my talents. I leave it to politicians to investigate the effects it is likely to produce on the prosperity of the British empire; esteeming myself sufficiently happy if I may be the humble instrument of fixing your attention on subjects best fitted to prepare you for *a kingdom which cannot be moved;* being convinced, as you may infer from my constant practice, that this is neither the place nor the season for political discussion, and that the teachers of religion are called to a nobler occupation than to subserve the inter-

ests of party, or fan the flames of public dissension. In perfect consistence with this observation permit me to remark, that it appears to me highly presumptuous to attempt to scan the secret purpose of the Deity, in this dispensation, by assigning it to *specific* moral causes. *His ways are in the great deep, and his paths past finding out.* That it ought to be considered as a signal rebuke and chastisement, designed to bring our sins to remembrance, there is no doubt; but to attempt to specify the particular crimes and delinquencies which have drawn down this visitation is inconsistent with the modesty which ought to accompany all inquiries into the mysteries of Providence; and especially repugnant to the spirit which this most solemn and affecting event should inspire. At a time when every creature ought to tremble under the judgments of God, it ill becomes us to indulge in reciprocal recrimination; and when *the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint*, it is not for the members to usurp the seat of judgment by hurling mutual accusations and reproaches against each other. Are there not sufficient provocations to be found in all ranks and classes, from the lowest to the highest, to justify and account for these and still greater severities?—or is it necessary to look farther for the vindication of the equity of the divine proceeding than to the open impiety and profaneness, the perjury and injustice, the profanation of the Sabbath and contempt of sacred things, the profligacy of the lower and the irreligion and impurity of the higher orders, which, notwithstanding the multitude of splendid exceptions, still form the national character?

That we are a people severely scourged and corrected, none will deny; but that we have *turned to him that smiteth us*, it would be presumption to assert. Yet if any people were ever more forcibly reminded of the interposition of Providence than another, it is certain we are that people; having been conducted through the most intricate and mysterious paths, in such a manner as totally to confound the wisdom of the wise and the understanding of the prudent, both in our adverse and prosperous fortunes. Preserved amid the wreck of nations and the hurricane of revolution, which swept for twenty years over the face of Europe with ruin and desolation in its train, we have not only been permitted to maintain our soil unviolated and our independence unimpaired, but have come forth from a contest of unparalleled difficulty and extent with a more splendid reputation and in a more commanding attitude than we possessed at any former period. Our successes, both by sea and land, have been so brilliant and decisive that it is not easy to determine whether we have acquired most glory as a military or a maritime power; while our achievements on each element have been such as to distance all competition. A profound peace has at length succeeded to a scene of hostilities which, for the fourth part of a century, covered the earth with armies, shook every kingdom to its basis, and ravaged and depopulated the fairest portion of the globe. But what has been the issue? We have retired from the combat, successful indeed beyond our most sanguine expectations,—but bleeding, breathless exhausted; with symptoms of internal weakness and decay, from which, if we ever entirely recover, it must be

when the present generation has disappeared from the earth. When was it ever known before that peace was more destructive than war? —that a people were more impoverished by their victories than their defeats? and that the epoch of their glory was the epoch of their sufferings? Peace, instead of being the nurse of industry and the harbinger of plenty, as the experience of ages had taught us to expect, has brought poverty, discontent, and distress in her train; inflicting all the privations of a state of hostility without its hopes, and all the miseries of war without its splendour. What but an Omnipotent hand could have infused such venom into the greatest of blessings as utterly to transform its nature, and cause it to produce some of the worst effects of a curse?

While we were engaged in the fearful struggle which has at length been so successfully terminated, it pleased the great Ruler of nations to visit our aged, beloved, and revered monarch with one of the most dreadful calamities incident to human nature, the pressure of which still continues, we fear, with unabated severity. While we are deeply moved at the awful spectacle of majesty labouring under a permanent and hopeless eclipse, we are consoled with the reflection that he walked in the light while he possessed the light; that as long as the exercise of reason was continued, he communed with eternal truth; and that from the shades which now envelop him he will, at no very distant period, emerge into the brightness of celestial vision.

Though it may be difficult to conceive of a series of events more likely to awe the mind to a sense of the power and presence of the Deity than those we have witnessed, he has thought fit to address us once more, if not in louder, yet in more solemn and affecting accents. An unexampled depopulation of the species by the sword had indeed nearly rendered death the most familiar of all spectacles, and left few families unbereaved; but neither the narrative of battles nor the sight of carnage are best suited to inculcate the lessons of mortality; nor are the moral features of that last enemy ever less distinctly discerned than in the moments when he is most busy, or on those fields of slaughter where he appears the principal agent. The "pomp and circumstance of war," the tumultuous emotions of the combatants, and the eager anxiety of the contending parties, attentive to the important political consequences attached to victory and defeat, absorb every other impression and obstruct the entrance of serious and pensive reflection.

How different the example of mortality presented on the present occasion? Without the slightest warning, without the opportunity of a moment's immediate preparation, in the midst of the deepest tranquillity, at midnight, a voice was heard in the palace, not of singing men and singing women, not of revelry and mirth, but the cry, *Behold, the Bridegroom cometh.* The mother, in the bloom of youth, spared just long enough to hear the tidings of her infant's death, almost immediately, as if summoned by his spirit, follows him into eternity. "It is a night much to be remembered." Who foretold this event, who conjectured it, who detected at a distance the faintest presage of

its approach, which, when it arrived, mocked the efforts of human skill, as much by their incapacity to prevent, as their inability to foresee it? Unmoved by the tears of conjugal affection, unawed by the presence of grandeur and the prerogatives of power, inexorable Death hastened to execute his stern commission, leaving nothing to royalty itself but to retire and weep. Who can fail to discern, on this awful occasion, the hand of Him who *bringeth princes to nothing, who maketh the judges of the earth as vanity; who says, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown; yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth; and he shall blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble?*

It is better, says Solomon, *to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to heart.* While there are few who are not, at some season or other, conducted to that house, a nation enters it on the present visitation, there to learn, in the sudden extinction of the heiress of her monarchy, the vanity of all but what relates to eternity and the absolute necessity of having our *loins girt, our lamps burning, and ourselves as those who are looking for the coming of the Bridegroom.*

We presume there are none who can survey this signal interposition of Providence with indifference, or refrain from "laying it to heart." No, illustrious princess, it will be long ere the name of Charlotte Augusta is mentioned by Britons without tears; remote posterity also, which shall peruse thy melancholy story, will "lay it to heart," and will be tempted to ask, why no milder expedient could suffice to correct our levity, and make us mindful of our latter end; while they look back with tender pity on the amiable victim, who seems to have been destined by the inscrutable wisdom of Providence to warn and edify that people by her death which she was not permitted, to the extent of her ambition, to benefit by her life.

Should her lamented and untimely end be the means of giving that religious impulse to the public mind which shall turn us to righteousness, the benefits she will have conferred upon her country in both worlds will more than equal the glories of the most prosperous and extended reign.

A SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF THE

REV. JOHN RYLAND, D.D.

PREACHED AT

THE BAPTIST MEETING, BROADMEAD, BRISTOL,

JUNE 5, 1825.

A SERMON.

John xxi. 7.

That disciple whom Jesus loved.

It has been alleged by unbelievers as a defect in the morality of the gospel that it neglects to inculcate patriotism and friendship. In regard to the first of these, it seems a sufficient reply that though an attachment to our country as such is not expressly enjoined in the New Testament, the duties which result from the relation in which Christians stand to their rulers are prescribed with great perspicuity, and enforced by very solemn sanctions; and if the reciprocal duties of princes and magistrates are not enjoined with equal explicitness (as could not be expected in writings where they are not addressed) the design of their appointment is defined in such a manner as leaves them at no loss to perceive what it is that they owe to the community. But where these duties are faithfully discharged by each party, the benefits derived from the social compact are so justly appreciated and so deeply felt, that the love of country is less liable to defect than to excess. In all well-ordered polities, if we may judge from the experience of past ages, the attachment of men to their country is in danger of becoming an absorbing principle, inducing not merely a forgetfulness of private interest, but of the immutable claims of humanity and justice. In the most virtuous times of the Roman republic their country was the idol, at whose shrine her greatest patriots were at all times prepared to offer whole hecatombs of human victims: the interests of other nations were no further regarded than as they could be rendered subservient to the gratification of her ambition; and mankind at large were considered as possessing no rights but such as might with the utmost propriety be merged in that devouring vortex. With all their talents and their grandeur they were unprincipled oppressors, leagued in a determined conspiracy against the liberty and independence of mankind. In the eyes of an enlightened philanthropist, patriotism, pampered to such an excess, loses the name of virtue; it is the bond and cement of a guilty confederation. It was worthy of the wisdom of our great legislator to decline the express inculca-

tion of a principle so liable to degenerate into excess, and to content himself with prescribing the virtues which are sure to develope it as far as is consistent with the dictates of universal benevolence.

The second part of the objection to which we have alluded is susceptible of a similar answer. Let it be admitted that our Lord did not formally prescribe the cultivation of friendship; and what then? He prescribed the virtues out of which it will naturally grow; he prescribed the cultivation of benevolence in all its diversified modes of operation. In his personal ministry, and in that of his apostles, he enjoined humility, forbearance, gentleness, kindness, and the most tender sympathy with the infirmities and distresses of our fellow-creatures; and his whole life was a perfect transcript of these virtues. But these in the ordinary course of events, and under the usual arrangements of Providence, are the best preparation for friendship as well as the surest guarantee for the discharge of its duties, and the observation of its rights. For such is the secret affinity of mind to mind, such the social constitution of man, that he who is imbued with these dispositions can scarcely fail, in the pilgrimage of life, to contract a friendship with one or more of his species. Accustomed to look upon the whole human family with a benign aspect, some members of it will attract more of his attention and awaken more of his complacency than others; where their virtues are equal, some more than ordinary congeniality of taste and temper will form a basis of preference, a motive for predilection, which, confirmed by habit and strengthened by the reciprocal exchange of gratifying attentions and kind offices will at length ripen into friendship. A mind habitually tender easily melts into softness, and exchanges the sentiments of esteem for those of specific attachment and endearment. What is friendship in virtuous minds but the concentration of benevolent emotions heightened by respect and increased by exercise on one or more objects? Friendship is not a state of feeling, whose elements are specifically different from those which compose every other. The emotions we feel towards a friend are the same in kind with those we experience on other occasions; but they are more complex and more exalted. It is the general sensibility to kind and social affections, more immediately directed to one or more individuals, and in consequence of its particular direction giving birth to an order of feeling more vivid and intense than usual, which constitutes friendship. Hence we perceive the impropriety of making it the subject of legislation. It is the duty of every man to cultivate the dispositions which lead to friendship, the love of his species, admiration of virtue, regard to the feelings of others, gratitude, humility, along with the most inflexible adherence to probity and truth. Wherever these exist, friendship will be the natural result; but it will result as a felicity rather than as a duty; and is to be placed among the rewards of virtue rather than its obligations. Happiness is not to be prescribed, but to be enjoyed; and such is the benevolent arrangement of Divine Providence, that wherever there is a moral preparation for it, it follows of course; and such are the pleasures and advantages derived from virtuous friendship. Its duties,

supposing it to be formed, are deducible, with sufficient certainty and precision, from the light of nature and the precepts of Scripture, and none more sacred; but in the act of forming it the mind disdains the fetters of prescriptions, and is left to be determined by the impulse of feeling, and the operation of events.

Besides, were friendship inculcated as a matter of indispensable obligation, endless embarrassments would arise in determining at what period the relation shall commence; whether with one or with more; and at what stage in the progress of mutual attraction, at what point the feelings of reciprocal regard shall be deemed to reach the maturity which entitles them to the sacred name of friendship. The laws of virtue and piety are coeval with our existence, considered as reasonable and accountable creatures. Their authority is founded on immutable relations, the duties resulting from which are capable of being clearly conceived and exactly defined; but he who should undertake to prescribe to the subtle and mysterious impulses which invite susceptible minds to friendship, would find himself engaged in an attempt as hopeless as to regulate the motions of the air which *bloweth where it listeth.*

But though the cultivation of friendship, for the reasons already assigned, is not made the subject of precept, but is left to grow up of itself under the general culture of reason and religion, it is one of the fairest productions of the human soil, the cordial of life, the lenitive of our sorrows, and the multiplier of our joys; the source equally of animation and of repose. He who is destitute of this blessing, amid the greatest crowd and pressure of society, is doomed to solitude; and however surrounded with flatterers and admirers, however armed with power and rich in the endowments of nature and of fortune, has no resting-place. The most elevated station in life affords no exemption from those agitations and disquietudes which can only be laid to rest on the bosom of a friend.

The sympathies even of virtuous minds, when not warmed by the breath of friendship, are too faint and cold to satisfy the social cravings of our nature; their compassion is too much dissipated by the multiplicity of its objects and the varieties of distress to suffer it to flow long in one channel; while the sentiments of congratulation are still more slight and superficial. A transient tear of pity, or a smile of complacency equally transient, is all we can usually bestow on the scenes of happiness or of misery which we meet with in the paths of life. But man naturally seeks for a closer union, a more permanent conjunction of interests, a more intense reciprocation of feeling; he finds the want of one or more with whom he can trust the secrets of his heart, and relieve himself by imparting the interior joys and sorrows with which every human breast is fraught. He seeks, in short, another self, a kindred spirit whose interest in his welfare bears some proportion to his own, with whom he may lessen his cares by sympathy and multiply his pleasures by participation.

The satisfaction derived from surveying the most beautiful scenes of nature or the most exquisite productions of art is so far from being

complete, that it almost turns into uneasiness when there is none with whom we can share it; nor would the most passionate admirer of eloquence or poetry consent to witness their most stupendous exertions upon the simple condition of not being permitted to reveal his emotions. So essential an ingredient in felicity is friendship apart from the more solid and permanent advantages it procures, and when viewed in no other light than as the organ of communication, the channel of feeling and of thought. But if joy itself is a burden which the heart can ill sustain without inviting others to partake of it, how much more the corrosions of anxiety, the perturbations of fear, and the dejection arising from sudden and overwhelming calamity?

But it is not merely as a source of pleasure or as a relief from pain that virtuous friendship is to be coveted; it is at least as much recommended by its utility. He who has made the acquisition of a judicious and sympathizing friend may be said to have doubled his mental resources: by associating an equal, perhaps a superior mind with his own, he has provided the means of strengthening his reason, of perfecting his counsels, of discerning and correcting his errors. He can have recourse at all times to the judgment and assistance of one who with the same power of discernment with himself, comes to the decision of a question with a mind neither harassed with the perplexities nor heated with the passions which so frequently obscure the perception of our true interests. Next to the immediate guidance of God by his Spirit, the counsel and encouragement of virtuous and enlightened friends afford the most powerful aid in the encounter of temptation and in the career of duty.

Wisdom, indeed, is not confined to any limited circle, much less to the very narrow one of private friendship; and sound advice may often be procured from those with whom we have contracted no ties of intimacy. But the patient attention required to comprehend and encounter all the peculiarities of the case; the persevering ardour, the persuasive sympathy necessary to invest it with authority and to render it effectual, will be wanting; in the absence of which the wisest counsel is a wintry and sickly beam, which plays on the surface only: it may enlighten, but will seldom penetrate or melt. The consciousness, too, of possessing a share in the esteem and affection of persons of distinguished worth is a powerful support to every virtuous resolution: it sheds a warm and cheerful light over the paths of life; fortifies the breast against unmanly dejection and pusillanimous fears; while the apprehension of forfeiting these advantages presents a strong resistance to the encroachments of temptation. There are higher considerations, it is true, which ought invariably to produce the same effect; but we have no such superfluity of strength as should induce us to decline the aid of inferior motives, when all are but barely adequate to the exigencies of our state. The recollection that we are acting under the eye of Omniscience will lose nothing of its force by being joined to the remembrance, that our conduct is subject to the scrutiny of friends whose sentiments are in unison, whose influence coincides with the voice of conscience and of God. And surely it

must be no contemptible aid in the discharge of his duties which he derives who has invited the benevolent inspection of his actions, the honest reprehension of his errors, and the warm encouragement of his virtues; who, accustomed to lay open the interior of his character and the most retired secrets of his heart, finds in the appprobation of his friend the suffrage of his conscience reflected and confirmed; who delighted, but not elated, by the esteem he has secured and the confidence he has won, advances with renovated vigour in the paths that lead to glory, honour, and immortality. The pleasures resulting from the mutual attachment of kindred spirits are by no means confined to the moments of personal intercourse; they diffuse their odours, though faintly, through the seasons of absence; refreshing and exhilarating the mind by the remembrance of the past and the anticipation of the future. It is a treasure possessed when it is not employed; a reserve of strength, ready to be called into action when most needed; a fountain of sweets, to which we may continually repair, whose waters are inexhaustible.

Friendship founded on the principles of worldly morality, recognised by virtuous heathens, such as that which subsisted between Atticus and Cicero, which the last of these illustrious men has rendered immortal, is fitted to survive through all the vicissitudes of life; but it belongs only to a union founded on religion, to continue through an endless duration. The former of these stood the shock of conflicting opinions, and of a revolution that shook the world; the latter is destined to survive when the heavens are no more, and to spring fresh from the ashes of the universe. The former possessed all the stability which it is possible to sublunary things; the latter partakes of the eternity of God. Friendship founded on worldly principles is *natural*, and though composed of the best elements of nature is not exempt from its mutability and frailty; the latter is *spiritual*, and therefore unchanging and imperishable. The friendship which is founded on kindred tastes and congenial habits, apart from piety, is permitted by the benignity of Providence to embellish a world which, with all its magnificence and beauty, will shortly pass away; that which has religion for its basis will ere long be transplanted in order to adorn the paradise of God.

But it is time to turn our attention to the passage selected for our present meditations: *that disciple whom Jesus loved.* This is not the only instance in which the writer of this history designates himself under that character; whence we may with certainty infer, that the preference shown him by our Lord above the other apostles was so notorious, that the mention of it, even by the person on whom it was bestowed, could occasion no offence. He had recourse to it, without doubt, from a dictate of modesty, that he might avoid the disagreeable necessity of often speaking of himself under his proper name. It is natural to feel some curiosity respecting the character of one who was the object of so distinguished a preference. Are we to impute it to a decided superiority in intellectual and moral attainments? Perhaps not. The consideration of moral worth will always enter deeply into

the motives which actuate wise and good men in their choice of friends but it is far from constituting the only one. A certain congeniality of mind and manners, aided by the operation of adventitious circumstances, contributes a principal share towards the formation of such unions; nor is it presumption to conjecture that, in the instance before us, there was something in the taste and disposition of our Lord, considered as a man, more in unison with those of John than with any of the other apostles. As every character has its peculiar mould, by which it is more or less distinguished, we may be allowed to suppose, that in addition to the possession of unrivalled excellence in general, that of our Lord was marked by certain discriminating features. The virtues of Elijah, which reappeared in John the Baptist, stern, awful, and majestic, fitted to alarm a slumbering world by a denunciation of the wrath to come;— how different the aspect they wear from those of *the man of sorrows*, who wept at the grave of Lazarus! We follow the footsteps of this greatest of prophets with a reverence bordering upon terror; while we behold in the character of our Lord, though transcendently superior, such a meek and softened majesty that we are not surprised that he who knew him best delighted to designate him under the appellation of *the Lamb*. The distinguishing features of our Lord's character, viewed as a perfect human being, were, unquestionably, humility and love; nor is it less certain, or less obvious, that these were the qualities most conspicuous in the character of the beloved disciple.

This apostle presents a striking contrast to a certain class of writers, who, by no means deficient in talent, but possessing little sensibility, afford the reader little or no insight into their character. Their conceptions and their language are cast into a certain artificial mould, which leaves scarcely any traces of individuality. The writings of John are of the most contrary description; they are replete with traits of character; the writer presents his heart in almost every page. A tender sensibility pervades his gospel, sufficient to distinguish it from either of the preceding; nor is it possible to believe that the narrative of the resurrection of Lazarus, or of the last scenes of our Saviour's life, were composed without tears. Such strokes of pathos, such touching simplicity, such minuteness of detail, without puerility or redundance, characterize the history of these extraordinary events, as could only have proceeded from one who felt himself a party concerned; who, with a most intimate acquaintance with his subject, wrote still more from his heart than from his head. He is little to be envied who can peruse these inimitable narratives without being moved: the author places us in the very midst of the scenes he describes; we listen to the discourses, we imbibe the sentiments of the principal actors; and while he says nothing of himself, he lays open the whole interior of his character. We feel ourselves introduced, not so much to the acquaintance of an inspired apostle as to that of the most amiable of men.

The selection of his materials is such as it were natural to expect from *the disciple whom Jesus loved;* for, while the other evangelists direct their chief attention to the miracles of our Lord, John relates

his sentiments and discourses. The preceding evangelists content themselves, for the most part, with exhibiting his human history, in the record of those facts which established the truth of his doctrine and the divinity of his mission; John commences from an earlier date, draws back the veil of eternity, and shows us the subject of his history subsisting before all worlds, presiding in the work of creation and providence.

It is from this apostle we learn most fully the state of the controversy between our Lord and the unbelieving Jews; in the course of which we have continual occasion to admire the quickness and dexterity, the subtlety and profundity displayed in various discourses, which, but for him, would have been lost in oblivion. He expatiates with peculiar interest on the last interview between Christ and his disciples; where he assures them of his unalterable attachment, and exerts himself to console their grief, to reanimate their confidence, and dispel their fears, by the prospect of seeing them again, when their joy should be such as *no man should take from them.* He either entirely omits, or passes rapidly over the transactions recorded by the other evangelists; but when he approaches the scene of the crucifixion, he lingers and dwells upon the circumstances of that awful tragedy with a minuteness and particularity of detail, as though it had never been recorded before.

In the short epistles inscribed with his name, the topic on which he chiefly insists is LOVE, which, in its sublimer form, constitutes the moral essence of the Deity, as well as the very sum and substance of true religion. His heart was in perfect unison with his subject. Written, as is supposed, at a very advanced age, the spirit they breathe is that of a father inculcating on his children the cultivation of every virtue, and especially of mutual affection, with that neglect of order and arrangement, and those reiterations and overflowings of tender importunity which are suited to such a character. Instead of assuming an air of superiority, in his first epistle he suppresses his name; and in the two last takes to himself a title common to every Christian pastor. He is not satisfied with styling his converts children,—he styles them little children:—*Little children, keep yourselves from idols;* which reminds me of a beautiful anecdote related by Eusebius, that when he was too much oppressed with infirmity to permit him to exercise his public ministry any longer, he was accustomed to be carried into the church; and after stretching forth his feeble arms, and crying, *Little children, love one another*, to retire from the assembly. So deeply was he imbued with the seraphic love of the bosom on which he leaned, that it remained unimpaired amid the decays of nature and the eclipse of intellect.

In the early part of his life, if we may judge from a single incident, from his proposing to call down fire from heaven to avenge the insult offered to our Lord, he possessed an impetuous and eager spirit, not always restrained by *the wisdom that is from above;* but in maturer years it appears to have subsided, and given place to none but benign affections. His meekness and tenderness, however, were never in-

dulged at the expense of truth, his adherence to which was inviolable; nor did he fail to express the utmost abhorrence at any attempt to corrupt it; insomuch that I can easily believe an anecdote related by Eusebius, that on his entering a public bath, and finding the notorious heresiarch Cerinthus there, he left it with precipitation, exclaiming, "Let us flee from this place, lest it fall and crush that enemy of God!" His benevolence spent itself, not in a hollow and unmeaning complaisance to the impugners of the gospel, but in efforts to convert them; and just in proportion as he loved his fellow-creatures, was his anxiety to preserve, unimpaired and unmixed, the doctrine by which they were to be saved.

But enough has been said on the character of this eminent apostle Before we dismiss this branch of our subject, it will be proper to advert to a few indications of the preference with which he was honoured. On perusing the evangelists, it appears that he was invariably selected by our Lord as one of the three who were present in the most retired scenes of his life, on the mount of transfiguration, in the house of Jaïrus, and in the garden of Gethsemane. Whoever else were absent, John was sure to share his most confidential moments, and to witness his most secret joys and conflicts. At the paschal supper, to which he looked forward with so much eagerness as the appointed season for a more unreserved disclosure of his purposes than he had made before, he placed John next to himself, in such a manner that his head naturally rested on his bosom. Through him it was that the rest of the disciples applied to our Lord to be informed who it was that should betray him. But the most decisive evidence of the preference bestowed upon John arises from his being chosen to take care of his widowed mother after his decease. The circumstance is related with inimitable simplicity and beauty. No sooner was our Saviour elevated on the cross than he sees his mother standing by along with *the disciple whom he loved:* to the mother he said, *Behold thy son;* to John, *Behold thy mother: and from that moment John took her to his own house.* What a rebuke to that proud and false philosophy which pretends to extinguish the feelings of nature, and to erect its trophies on the ruins of humanity! By committing to the beloved disciple so precious a deposite, he gave him a stronger demonstration of his esteem than by a whole volume of panegyric.

After the resurrection and ascension, he continued to receive from his Saviour similar proofs of his preference. Preserved amid a violent and bloody persecution, he was permitted (such is the universal tradition of the church) to survive the rest of the apostles, to witness, in the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of its inhabitants, the fulfilment of his own predictions, and, finally, to close a life extended to an extreme old age in peace and in the bosom of his friends. Nor was this the only distinction he enjoyed. To him it was given to convey to the churches of Asia, among whom he dwelt, repeated messages from his ascended Lord to behold his glory, and to catch the last accents of inspiration. To him it was given, not only to record the life of the Saviour in common with the other evangelists, but to

transmit to future ages the principal events and vicissitudes which shall befall the church to the end of time, in a series of visions which revived the spirit and manner, and more than equalled the sublimity of the ancient prophets. Endowed with a genius equally simple and sublime, he mingles with ease among the worshippers before the throne, communes with beings of the highest order, and surveys the splendours of the celestial temple with an eye that never blenched. The place which he occupies in the order and succession of inspired men must at the same time ensure to him a high distinction; for while Moses leads the way, John brings up the rear of that illustrious company.

To the selection of the passage to which your attention is directed, I was led by an irresistible impulse the moment I heard of the melancholy event which has deprived you of your beloved pastor. It appeared to me peculiarly applicable to his character, nor am I apprehensive of encountering contradiction when I affirm, that among his numerous acquaintance an entire unanimity will be felt on this subject. It will be readily confessed, that his piety was of the same mould and complexion with that which distinguished the beloved disciple. In the attempt I shall make to delineate his character, let me not be suspected of the presumption of attempting to impart any information to *you*, on whose minds his virtues have made that indelible impression which is far above the power of words. It is solely for the use of those who were placed beyond the influence of his example and the benefit of his instructions, that it appears to me not improper to exhibit some of the more conspicuous features which contributed to render him so eminent a pattern of Christian excellence.

It is a homage due to departed worth, whenever it rises to such a height as to render its possessor an object of general attention, to endeavour to rescue it from oblivion; that when it is removed from the observation of men, it may still live in their memory, and transmit through the shades of the sepulchre some reflection, however faint, of its living lustre. By enlarging the cloud of witnesses by which we are encompassed, it is calculated to give a fresh impulse to the desire of imitation; and even the despair of reaching it is not without its use, by checking the levity and correcting the pride and presumption of the human heart.

Doctor Ryland was born January 29, 1753, at Warwick, where his venerable father exercised his ministry for some years; from whence he removed to Northampton.

The most remarkable particular recorded of his infancy is his early progress in the Hebrew language, which was such, that he read a chapter of the Hebrew Bible to the celebrated Hervey, before he was five years old. About his thirteenth year he became deeply impressed with religious concern; and without any thing very singular in his experience, his conviction ripened into genuine conversion, and he was baptized on a profession of his faith in his fourteenth year. At the request of the church he began to exercise his ministerial gifts in his

seventeenth year; and after continuing to assist his father for some years, he was ordained co-pastor with him in the year 1781. In this situation he remained for some time; when, on his father's removal from Northampton, he became sole pastor until the year 1793, when he received a unanimous invitation to the joint offices of president of the Bristol Education Society and pastor of Broadmead. How he conducted himself in the first scene of his labours many living witnesses can attest; suffice it to say, that his ministry during that period was eminently acceptable and useful. During his residence at Northampton, he was *in labours more abundant;* far from confining his ministry to a single spot, he diffused its benefits over a wide circle, preaching much in the surrounding villages; and though, on his removal to Bristol, his numerous avocations rendered his ministerial exertions less frequent, he may justly be considered, on the whole, as one of the most laborious of pastors. He preached, during his whole career, not less than eight thousand six hundred and ninety-one sermons, and at two hundred and eighty-six distinct places.

If as a preacher he never attained the highest summit of popularity, he was always heard with attention. His ministry was replete with instruction, and not unfrequently accompanied with an unction which rendered it irresistible. As he possessed none of those graces of elocution and manner which secure superficial applause, he was always most esteemed by those who heard him the oftenest; and his stated hearers rarely, if ever, wished to exchange the voice of their pastor for that of a stranger. His address was such as produced an instantaneous conviction of his sincerity. It displayed, even to the most superficial observer, a mind infinitely above being actuated by the lust of applause; a spirit deeply imbued with a sense of eternal realities, and ready to pour itself forth as a libation on the sacrifice of the faith and obedience of his converts. The effect of his discourses, excellent as they were in themselves, was prodigiously heightened by the veneration universally felt for his character, and the just and high estimation entertained of his piety. Piety, indeed, was his distinguished characteristic, which he possessed to a degree that raised him inconceivably beyond the level of ordinary Christians. Devotion appeared to be the principal element of his being: it was next to impossible to converse with him without perceiving how entirely it pervaded his mind, and imparted to his whole deportment an air of purity, innocence, and sanctity, difficult for words to express. His piety did not display itself in a profusion of religious discourse, nor in frequently alluding to the interior exercises of his mind on spiritual subjects. He was seldom known to speak of his religious joys or sorrows: his devotional feelings were too deep and too sacred to suffer themselves to evaporate in ordinary conversation. His religion appeared in its fruits; in gentleness, humility, and benevolence; in a steady, conscientious performance of every duty; and a careful abstinence from every appearance of evil. As little did his character partake of the ascetic. It never entered into his thoughts that religion was an enemy to the innocent pleasures and social endearments of human life of which he entertained a high relish,

and which his constant regard to the Deity rendered subservient to piety, by the gratitude which they inspired and the conviction which they deepened of the divine benignity. His love to the Great Supreme was equally exempt from slavish timidity and presumptuous familiarity: it was an awful love, such as the beatific vision may be supposed to inspire where the worshippers veil their faces in that presence in which they rejoice with ecstatic joy. As he cherished a firm persuasion that the attributes of the Deity ensure the production of the greatest possible sum of good, in comparison of which the quantity of natural and moral evil permitted to remain vanishes and disappears, his views of the divine administration were a source of unmingled joy; while his profound sense of the essential holiness and justice of the Supreme Ruler, kept alive those sentiments of penitence and humility to which too many *optimists* are strangers. *He feared the great and terrible name of the Lord his God.*

Humility was, in fact, the most remarkable feature of his character. It was depicted on his countenance, his manners, his language; it pervaded almost every thing he said or did. He might most truly be said, in the language of Scripture, to be *clothed* with it. The mode in which it operated was at the utmost remove from the shallow expedients adopted by those who vainly attempt to secure the praise of that quality without possessing it. It neither prompted him to depreciate his talents nor to disclaim his virtues; to speak in debasing terms of himself nor to exaggerate his imperfections and failings. It taught him the rarer art of forgetting himself. His readiness to take the lowest place could only be exceeded by the eagerness of all who knew him to assign him the highest; and this was the only competition which the distinctions of life ever cost him. His modesty was such that the praises he was most solicitous to merit he blushed to receive; and never appeared so disconcerted and embarrassed as when he was necessitated to hear his own commendations. Hence it will be easily inferred, that he was completely exempt from the jealousy of superior talent or reputation; that it gave him not a moment's uneasiness to find himself eclipsed, and that he was the ardent admirer and panegyrist of the mental endowments in which he was most deficient. Though he had neglected to cultivate the powers of his imagination, and was little distinguished for the graces of style, no one was ever more disposed to admire them wherever they were conspicuous. The candour and benignity of his mind prepared him to embrace every kind of intellectual superiority, to rejoice in every display of talent devoted to the interest of religion, and to derive exquisite gratification from the operation of those qualities and powers to which he made the least pretensions. His enjoyment of intellectual repast was not impaired by the consciousness of not having contributed to furnish it; and his virtue was thus its own reward, by enabling him to reap the harvest where he neither sowed the seed nor prepared the soil.

If any man ever practised the gentleness of Jesus Christ, it was certainly our lamented friend. Possessed of a temper naturally quick

and irritable, he had, by the aid of reason and religion, so far subdued that propensity, that it was rarely suffered to appear; and when it did, it was a momentary agitation which quickly subsided into kindness and benignity. His sensibility was exquisite. There were a numerous class of subjects to which he could rarely advert without tears. The bare recurrence to his mind of the great objects of religion was sufficient to produce a gush of tenderness; so entirely was his heart softened, that it might be truly styled *a heart of flesh*. Nor was his sensibility confined to religion. It pervaded the whole system of his life, producing a quick and powerful sympathy, not only with his own species, but with the whole circle of animated nature, the properties of which he took great delight in investigating, and in tracing the exquisite contrivance of its benevolent Author for its preservation and enjoyment.

His extreme susceptibility of feeling combined with his gentleness and timidity, necessarily exposed him to be wounded whenever he encountered harsh and unfeeling manners; and from the same cause he was liable to be hurt by every symptom of unkindness, even where none was intended. His sensitive mind was impressed with every variety of temper in those with whom he conversed; and if his peace was less frequently invaded from this quarter than might have been expected, it is to be ascribed to that reverence which his character so universally inspired. It seemed a sort of sacrilege to trespass upon so much innocence and piety.

And here I cannot but remark, that though religion in its ordinary mode of exhibition commands but little respect, when it rises to the sublime, and is perceived to tincture and pervade the whole character, it seldom fails to draw forth the homage of mankind. The most hardened impiety and daring profligacy will find it difficult to despise the man who manifestly appears to walk with God, whose whole system of life is evidently influenced and directed by the powers of the world to come. The ridicule cast on religious characters is not always directed towards their religion, but more often perhaps to the little it performs contrasted with the loftiness of its pretensions; a ridicule which derives its force from the very sublimity of the principles which the profession of piety assumes. It may be doubted whether the character of Dr. Ryland provoked, on any occasion, the sneer of the infidel or the scorn of the ungodly.

The opportunities of making great sacrifices for the good of mankind are of rare occurrence, and he who remains inactive till it is in his power to confer signal benefits or yield important services, is in imminent danger of incurring the doom of the slothful servant. It is the preference of duty to inclination in the ordinary course of life, it is the practice of self-denial in a thousand little instances which forms the truest test of character, and secures the honour and the reward of those who *live not to themselves*. Viewed in this light, our lamented friend presented a pattern of Christian virtue rarely if ever surpassed. His whole life was a series of acts of self-denial; his conduct appeared invariably to proceed from the impulse of benevolence and the sense

of duty; and though not exempt from the errors and imperfections incident to the present state, his *eye was always single*, his intentions always upright. If the essence of Christian perfection consists in a sole and supreme desire to do the will of God, he probably made as near an approach to it as is attainable in the present state, though he not only never pretended to it, but held all such pretensions in abhorrence.

Justice to his memory will not permit me to suppress the mention of that strict and inviolable regard to truth which he preserved in all his words and actions. He would never allow himself to employ those exaggerations and colours in the narration of facts which many who would shudder at a deliberate falsehood freely indulge; some for the gratification of their passions or the advancement of their interests, and others purely from the impulse of vanity and a wish to render their narratives more striking, and their conversation more poignant. Whatever Dr. Ryland affirmed was, as far as his knowledge extended, as certain as an identical proposition; nor was he satisfied with the substantial truth of what he asserted; he was so anxious that the impression he conveyed should exactly coincide, as well in its degree as in kind, with his internal conviction, that, if it be possible, he was too tenacious of truth, and may be said to have carried his scrupulosity too far. I have often been amused at observing the compass he would fetch, and the circumlocutions he would have recourse to in the narration of facts, rather than incur the possibility of misrepresentation or mistake.

Few men have exhibited more unequivocal proofs of candour than your excellent and lamented pastor. Though a Calvinist, in the strictest sense of the word, and attached to its peculiarities in a higher degree than most of the advocates of that system, he extended his affection to all who bore the image of Christ, and was ingenious in discovering reasons for thinking well of many who widely dissented from his religious views. No man was more remarkable for combining a zealous attachment to his own principles with the utmost liberality of mind towards those who differed from him; an abhorrence of error with the kindest feelings towards the erroneous. He detested the spirit of monopoly in religion, and opposed every tendency to circumscribe it by the limits of party. His treatise on Baptism furnishes a beautiful specimen of the manner in which religious controversy should be conducted on a subject on which the combatants on both sides have frequently disgraced themselves by an acrimony and bitterness in an inverse proportion to the importance of the point in debate. How extraordinary is it, that they who differ only on one subject, and that confessedly of secondary moment, should have contended with more fierceness than has usually been displayed in a contest *pro aris et focis*, for all that is dear and important in Christianity! Is it that their near approach as religious denominations exposes them more to the spirit of rivalry, as adjoining kingdoms are the most hostile to each other, or that it is the property of bigotry to acquire an additional degree of malignity by being concentrated on one point and directed to one

object? Whatever the cause may be, the fact is singular and greatly to be lamented. He whose removal from us we so deeply regret was too thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Christ to expose him to that snare; his love of good men of every nation, sect, and party was fervent and disinterested, nor was it confined to the bounds of his personal knowledge; it engaged him in a most affectionate and extensive correspondence with eminent persons in remote quarters of the globe, whose faces he never saw; so signally was he prepared for sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of Heaven, where the whole assembly of the church of the first-born will be convened before the throne of God and the Lamb.

In addition to his other excellences, none who were honoured with his intimacy will fail to recollect his diligence in the improvement of time, of the value of which he entertained too deep a sense to allow any part of it to run to waste. By the practice of early rising and a most exact distribution of his hours to their respective employments, he contrived to husband a treasure which no one is permitted to squander without severely repenting it, though that repentance may possibly arrive too late. Employing every day as if it were the last, and subjecting every portion of time to a religious regulation, he *worked out his salvation with fear and trembling*. From taste as well as from principle he was warmly attached to order and method, which he extended to the minutest particulars. Thus the transactions of his whole life lay before him, by looking back on the turns and vicissitudes of which he was accumulating fresh materials for gratitude, and acquiring new lessons of prudence and piety.

That with all this varied excellence he united some imperfections will be readily allowed; at the same time it is but justice to remark, that they were in the strictest sense of the word *imperfections*, since they grew out of his natural temperament, and were not to be imputed to an obliquity of will or to a deficiency in the strength of his moral principle. The most conspicuous of these was a certain timidity of spirit, a proneness to augur danger where none existed, which, from an excessive apprehension of doing evil, sometimes arrested his power of doing good. His caution was extreme, and his natural aversion to bold and hazardous measures, on some occasions, enervated his resolutions and crippled his efforts. Alive to the possible inconvenience resulting from an unnecessary disclosure of his views, he narrowed his confidence too much, lost the advantage of that assistance and co-operation which he might easily have commanded, and in some of the most trying exigencies of his life doomed himself to walk alone. It must be also acknowledged by his warmest admirers that he was deficient in the spirit of authority, that he wanted the power of asserting his rights, of repressing the encroachments of petulance, and of sustaining his pretensions to rule. The extreme gentleness of his character was such, that it left him too much to the mercy of those who were conscious they might abuse it without danger of incurring his resentment. He not only carried with him no *offensive*, but he had no *defensive* armour. This want of force and energy of character,

which was his chief imperfection, was not, there is reason to believe, entirely natural, but to be ascribed in a great measure to an injudicious mode of treatment in early life, and to some severe trials in the commencement of his career, which pressed with such force on his mind that it never entirely recovered its elasticity. He witnessed in his excellent father an excess of vehemence, a careless intrepidity of temper, that with the most upright intentions involved him in so much distress, that his anxiety to avoid that extreme betrayed him into a contrary one. The grand maxim which he seems to have adopted for the regulation of his life was a determination to shun every approach to what he had seen productive of so much inconvenience; forgetting, perhaps, too much, that the opposite to that which is wrong is not always right. Hence the fear of consequences predominated too much in his course of action, and he was more easily deterred by the apprehension of possible evil than incited to action by the prospect of good. In the words of an ingenious writer, employed on a different occasion, "*there was nothing he needed to be cautioned against so much as caution itself.*"*

I am aware there are those who have charged our excellent friend with a want of openness of character. As far as such an imputation has any colour of truth, it is but just to remark, that the deficiency complained of was in no degree tinctured with dissimulation or cunning. It was partly the effect of that timidity which he was acknowledged to possess, partly of that gentleness which shrunk with an instinctive recoil from contention, and which disposed him, however his feelings might be wounded, to breathe out his complaints in the ear of friendship rather than demand such an explanation or apology as might have restored confidence and prevented a repetition of the offence. He repressed his anger, but indulged his grief; and was accustomed on such occasions to conduct himself rather like a person wounded than offended. Thus the uneasy sensations with which his mind was fraught were allowed to accumulate, producing not malignity indeed or rancour, of which he was incapable, but permanent disgust. *Be ye angry*, saith the Scripture, *and sin not.* A violent suppression of the natural feelings is not the best expedient for obviating their injurious effects; and though nothing requires a more vigilant restraint than the emotions of anger, the uneasiness of which it is productive is, perhaps, best evaporated by its natural and temperate expression: not to say that it is a wise provision in the economy of nature for the repression of injury, and the preservation of the peace and decorum of society.

Such, and such only, as it appears to me, was the origin of that reserve which forms the most plausible objection to his character, and which, when closely investigated, will be considered more as an infelicity than a fault. That it contributed to render him less influential, less powerful, and totally disqualified him to be the head of a party will be readily admitted; but it may be doubted whether it rendered him much less amiable. The worst effect of it was, that it

* See Morris's "Life of Fuller," a work which contains a most able and accurate delineation of the character of that extraordinary man.

sometimes imparted to his conduct the semblance of disingenuous concealment, while he was in reality an example of artless simplicity. For the liberty I have assumed of alluding to the imperfections of our lamented friend, my only apology is, that unqualified praise is entitled to little credit, and that the failings which attach to the character of the best of men are often as instructive as their virtues.

It may be expected that something should be said of his literary character and attainments; a circumstance not to be neglected in speaking of the president of a theological institute. My knowledge, however, on this head is too limited to allow me to say more than that he was a scholar from his infancy, that his attainments in the Hebrew language were profound, that he had a general acquaintance with the principles of science, and that his reading was various and extensive. As he was extremely addicted to study and meditation, so his mental opulence was much greater than his modesty would permit him to reveal; his disposition to conceal his attainments being nearly as strong as that of some men to display them.

He had a passion for natural history, in the pursuit of which he was much assisted by the peculiar structure of his eyes, which were a kind of natural microscopes. The observations he made on various natural productions, without the aid of instruments, were really surprising; and though the peculiarity in his visual organs deprived him of the pleasure of contemplating the sublime and magnificent features of nature, it gave him a singular advantage for tracing her minuter operations.

But the science in which he most delighted, and to which he bent the full force of his mind, was theology: not that theology which is built on human speculation, and supported by scholastic subtleties, but that knowledge of God, and of the mysteries of his will, which shone in the face of Jesus Christ. By the incessant study of the Scriptures, your pastor became a *scribe well instructed for the kingdom of God, and, like a wise householder, was enabled to bring forth out of his treasure things new and old.* The system of divinity to which he adhered was moderate Calvinism, as modelled and explained by that prodigy of metaphysical acumen, the celebrated Jonathan Edwards. For the writings of this great man, and those of his followers, he formed a warm predilection very early, which continued ever after to exert a powerful influence on his public ministry as well as his theological inquiries and pursuits. It inspired him with the most elevated conceptions of the moral character of the Deity, to the display of which it taught him to refer the whole economy of Providence and of grace, while he inculcated the indispensable duty of loving God, not merely for the benefits he bestows, but for what he is in himself, as essential to true religion. Hence he held in abhorrence those pretended religious affections which have their origin and termination in *self.* Whether he attached an undue importance to these speculations, and rendered them occasionally too prominent in his public ministrations, it is not for me to determine; it is certain that they effectually secured him from the slightest tendency to Antinomianism, and contributed not a

little to give purity and elevation to his religious views. The two extremes against which you are well aware he was most solicitous to guard the religious public were, Pelagian pride and Antinomian licentiousness; the first of which he detested as an insult on the grace of the gospel; the last, on the majesty and authority of the law.

By the removal of a minister of Christ so able, so disinterested, so devoted, you have sustained a loss, the magnitude of which it is difficult to appreciate, much more to repair. A successor you may easily procure, but where will you find one who will so *naturally care for your state?* who, *instant in season and out of season, is willing to impart to you not only the gospel, but his own soul also, because ye are dear unto him?* You may hear the same truths from other lips, supported by illustrations and arguments equally clear and cogent: the same duties inculcated by similar motives; but where will you find them enforced and recommended by an example equally elevated, an affection equally tender? Where will you look for another whose whole life is a luminous commentary on his doctrine, and who can invite you to no heights of piety but what you are conscious he has himself attained? When you add to this the effect of a residence among you of above thirty years, during which he became the confidential friend of your parents, the guide of your youth, and after witnessing the removal of one generation to a better world, was the honoured instrument of raising up another in their room; when you reflect on the continued emanations of wisdom and piety which proceeded for so long a space from this burning and shining light, you must be convinced that your loss is irreparable.*

The removal of such a pastor, of one whose labours you have so long enjoyed, is an epoch in the history of a church. It is an event which no living generation can witness more than once; and it surely calls upon you to consider what improvement you have made of such advantages, and what is the prospect that awaits you in the final day of account, when you and your pastor shall meet once more in the presence of the Judge; he to give an account of his ministry, you of its effect on your character. In relation to him the event is not doubtful. *He has finished his course, he has kept the faith; henceforth there remains for him a crown of righteousness which Christ the righteous Judge will give him on that day.* Would to God the issue were equally certain and equally happy on the part of those who so long enjoyed the benefit of such a ministry! That such will be the issue with respect to many who compose this auditory we cannot doubt; and with what inconceivable joy will he witness the felicity which awaits them, while he presents them before the throne, saying, *Here am I, and the children which thou hast given me!* With what delight will they renew the intercourse which death had interrupted, and retrace together the steps of their mysterious pilgrimage! while the gratitude they will experience towards him who was instrumental in conducting them

* The church wisely sought for a successor to their excellent pastor in the author of this discourse, who removed from Leicester to Bristol in the spring of 1826; but whose admirable labours there were terminated by death within five years.—Ed.

thither will be only inferior to that which they will feel towards God and the Lamb. How trivial will every other distinction then appear, compared to the honour of having turned many to righteousness! of having sown that seed which shall be reaped in life everlasting! A large portion of this felicity will, we cannot doubt, accrue to your pastor from those who are accustomed to assemble within these walls but should it in any instance be otherwise, should the event be of a contrary nature, he *will be a sweet-smelling savour to God*, even *in them that perish*. His happiness will be unimpaired, his reward undiminished, and the feelings with which he was wont to contemplate such a catastrophe will give place to sentiments of a higher order. The tears which he here wept over souls in danger of perishing will be shed no more; all his agitation and anxiety on their account will be laid to rest; nor will they who refused to constitute his joy by their conversion be suffered to mar his felicity by their destruction.

It is not the church and congregation only over which he presided with so much honour that feels itself interested in this event. The sensation which it has produced is widely extended, and has reached every part of this great and populous city; a city sufficiently enlightened to comprehend his worth and to mourn his loss. When a Reynolds, whose munificence flowed in a thousand channels, and whose example gave a new impulse to the public mind, quitted the scene which he had so long adorned with his presence, and enriched with his bounty, that a general sensation should be excited is no more than might be expected. But that the removal of a Christian minister, who possessed none of these advantages, should produce a regret so universal and so deep, is a pleasing homage to the majesty of religion; a practical demonstration of the power it exerts over the consciences of men. If blessings are bestowed and judgments averted in answer to prayer, as the Scripture every where teaches, and the efficacy of prayer is proportioned to the fervour of faith and the perfection of obedience, it is impossible to say how much the inhabitants of this place may be indebted to our excellent friend, by whose removal they have lost a powerful intercessor with God.

By an extensive circle of ministers and churches who shared his friendship and on various occasions enjoyed his labours, his loss will be deeply lamented, and not without reason; for though the faithful dispensers of evangelical instruction may now be reckoned by thousands, how few are left who can sustain a comparison with him in all the qualities which adorn the gospel, and give the possessor power with God.

That denomination of Christians of which he was so long a distinguished ornament will especially lay this providence to heart. Our hands are weakened this day; and if the glory is not departed from us, it is at least eclipsed and obscured. We have been visited with stroke upon stroke. Our brightest lights have been successively extinguished; and in vain do we look around for a Beddome, a Booth, a Fuller, or a Ryland; names which would have given lustre to any denomination, and were long the glory of ours. Your pastor wa

endeared to us as one of the last links of the chain which connected the present generation with the founders of the Baptist Mission. From the very beginning he mingled his counsels and his prayers with that determined band who, in the absence of all human resources, resolved to send the gospel to the remotest quarter of the globe; nor did he cease to his last hour to watch over its progress with parental solicitude. The intimate friendship which subsisted between that lovely triumvirate, Fuller, Ryland, and Sutcliff, which never suffered a moment's interruption or abatement, was cemented by their common attachment to that object. Of congenial sentiments and taste, though of very different temperament and character, there was scarce a thought which they did not communicate to each other, while they united all their energies in supporting the same cause; nor is it easy to determine whether the success of our mission is most to be ascribed to the vigour of Fuller, the prudence of Sutcliff, or the piety of Ryland. Is it presumption to suppose they still turn their attention to that object? that they bend their eyes on the plains of Hindostan, and sympathize with the toils of Carey and of his associates, content to postpone the pleasure which awaits them on his arrival, while they behold the steady though gradual progress of light, and see at no great distance the idol temples fallen, the vedas and shasters consigned to oblivion, the cruel rites of a degrading superstition abhorred and abandoned, and *the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of God and of his Christ?*

But by none will the removal of our excellent friend be more deeply felt than by our missionaries in India, and especially by the venerable Carey, whom he was the means of introducing into the ministry; a circumstance which he sometimes mentioned with honest triumph, after witnessing the career of that extraordinary man, who, from the lowest poverty and obscurity, without assistance, rose by dint of unrelenting industry to the highest honours of literature, became one of the first of orientalists, the first of missionaries, and the instrument of diffusing more religious knowledge among his contemporaries than has fallen to the lot of any individual since the Reformation; a man who unites, with the most profound and varied attainments, the fervour of an evangelist, the piety of a saint, and the simplicity of a child. His chief consolation, on receiving the melancholy tidings, will undoubtedly arise from the prospect of soon meeting in a better world, where those who have been fellow-pilgrims in this vale of tears will be associated in the presence of the Saviour, never more to part.

If the mere conception of the reunion of good men, in a future state, infused a momentary rapture into the mind of Tully,—if an airy speculation, for there is reason to fear it had little hold on his convictions, could inspire him with such delight, what may we be expected to feel who are assured of such an event by the *true sayings of God!* How should we rejoice in the prospect, the certainty rather, of spending a blissful eternity with those whom we loved on earth, of seeing them emerge from the ruins of the tomb and the deeper ruins of the fall, not only uninjured, but refined and perfected, "with every tear wiped from

their eyes," standing before the throne of God and the Lamb *in white robes and palms in their hands, crying with a loud voice, Salvation to God that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb, for ever and ever!* What delight will it afford to renew the sweet counsel we have taken together, to recount the toils of combat and the labour of the way, and to approach, not the house, but the throne of God in company, in order to join in the symphonies of heavenly voices, and lose ourselves amid the splendours and fruitions of the beatific vision!

To that state all the pious on earth are tending; and if there is a law from whose operation none are exempt, which irresistibly conveys their bodies to darkness and to dust, there is another not less certain or less powerful which conducts their spirits to the abodes of bliss, to the bosom of their Father and their God. The wheels of nature are not made to roll backward; every thing presses on towards eternity; from the birth of time an impetuous current has set in, which bears all the sons of men towards that interminable ocean. Meanwhile heaven is attracting to itself whatever is congenial to its nature, is enriching itself by the spoils of earth, and collecting within its capacious bosom whatever is pure, permanent, and divine, leaving nothing for the last fire to consume but the objects and the slaves of concupiscence; while every thing which grace has prepared and beautified shall be gathered and selected from the ruins of the world to adorn that eternal city *which hath no need of the sun neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God doth enlighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* Let us obey the voice that calls us thither; let us *seek the things that are above*, and no longer cleave to a world which must shortly perish, and which we must shortly quit, while we neglect to prepare for that in which we are invited to dwell for ever. Let us follow in the track of those holy men who together with your beloved and faithful pastor have taught us by their voice and encouraged us by their example, *that, laying aside every weight and the sin that most easily besets us, we may run with patience the race that is set before us.* While every thing within us and around us reminds us of the approach of death, and concurs to teach us that this is not our rest, let us hasten our preparations for another world, and earnestly implore that grace which alone can put an end to that fatal war which our desires have too long waged with our destiny. When these move in the same direction, and that which the will of heaven renders unavoidable shall become our choice, all things will be ours; life will be divested of its vanity, and death of its terrors. *Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting to the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which dwelleth righteousness.*

ON THE EXCELLENCY OF THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION:

THE

CIRCULAR LETTER

FROM THE

MINISTERS AND MESSENGERS OF THE BAPTIST CHURCHES

OF THE

Somersetshire and Wiltshire Association.

[WRITTEN IN 1787.]

THE EXCELLENCY

OF

THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.

Dear Brethren,

We are happy to be able to address you on the present occasion. We have many and great thanks to render to our common God and Father, for preserving us through another year, and permitting us once more to assemble ourselves together. We have too often experienced your candour and good-will to doubt of your bearing with us while we exhort you with all earnestness and sincerity.

You will remember, brethren, the dignity of the dispensation under which you live; that it is not the institution of man, but the wise and gracious plan of God to make you happy. With this view he raised up the people of the Jews, kept them distinct from all others, and gave them such a portion of knowledge as might, in due time, prepare for the display of the gospel. With this view a succession of priests was kept up, the eye of prophecy was enlightened, and the hand of Omnipotence stretched forth. After thus preparing the way, our great Redeemer himself appeared upon the earth, lived in humiliation and sorrow, and died in agony and disgrace. During the time of his personal ministry he had every attestation of Deity in his favour, and the power of God was often exerted in a most signal manner. After his ascension, a larger measure of knowledge and power was given to his disciples than had been afforded them before. They asserted his character, and affirmed that he had risen from the dead, in the very place in which he had been crucified. They were endued with a miraculous skill in tongues, for the very purpose of spreading the gospel through the different parts of the world; and with what success they did it, and how, in the face of danger and of death, they maintained their cause, while many of them perished in their sufferings, is well known, and will draw tears of admiration and gratitude from all succeeding ages.

When we see the Saviour descending from heaven as a witness for God, and behold his sufferings and death, we cannot help being astonished at so stupendous a scene, and inquiring into the purpose it was intended to accomplish. One, among many other great ends which are answered by it, is the removing the ignorance and error in which we are by nature involved, and giving us the knowledge of God, and our true happiness. If there be a moral governor of the world, it must

be of great importance to know upon what terms we stand with him, and what expectations we may form from him. A sober, reflecting man could scarcely feel himself at ease till he attained to some certainty in points of so much consequence; and yet how little information we can derive from reason in inquiries of this nature may be seen from the experience of past ages, and those the most enlightened and refined; which, after all their researches, have not been able to come to any agreement, or to gain any satisfaction. We may discover, by the light of nature, the existence of a Being who is possessed of all possible perfection. The works of God sufficiently display his goodness, wisdom, and power; but with respect to the application of these in any particular instance it leaves us entirely at a loss. We have no measure which we can apply to the operations of an infinite mind; and, therefore, though we may be assured that the Divine Being possesses all the attributes which compose supreme excellence, it is impossible for us to say, in particular instances, what path of conduct may best consist with those perfections in their most extensive operation. Indeed, to discover not only the leading attributes of the Divine Nature, but to be acquainted beforehand with every direction they will take, would be fully to comprehend the Most High. When, therefore, without the aid of revelation, we attempt to foretel the dispensations of the Almighty we are lost in a maze, and are obliged to rest in vague and uncertain conjectures. This holds true, more especially, when applied to the conduct of Providence with respect to only a small part of creation. In this case our uncertainty is doubled, since we know that all the works of God form one vast system, and that the regulation of the parts must be subservient to the administration of the whole. But this situation is ours. Confined to a point in our existence, and limited in our ideas, we cannot tell what relation we bear to other beings, or how it may seem fit to Divine Providence to dispose of us, in relation to those higher and more ultimate designs which are continually carrying on. Our meaning may be illustrated by the following instance:—It is certain that the Divine Being is, in the greatest degree, compassionate and good; but, if a number of creatures render themselves unhappy by a wilful rebellion against him, a singular instance would arise. It would be impossible to say whether the exercise of compassion *here* would best comport with the highest goodness and the greatest happiness in the general administration of Providence, because no one could trace every relation which the parts bear to the whole.

This you will perceive is a case entirely to the point; for disorder and sin *have* entered into the world. It is evident things are turned out of their natural and original channel—that they are not what they *have* been, nor what they *ought* to be. Men have corrupted their way. A change so singular in the creation—a situation so striking, and so little to be apprehended under the government of a holy and perfect Being, naturally leads us to look for a revolution in the dispensations of Providence. In such a state, some new and awful interposition of the Divine hand might well be expected. There is something, at the

same time, in the idea of having provoked the displeasure of God, when seriously thought of, too heavy for the heart of man to bear. We cannot leave his presence, we cannot resist his power, we cannot evade his stroke Hence mankind, in all ages, have had their fears awakened, and have taken a gloomy survey of an hereafter. They saw death busy around them, carrying their fellow-creatures out of their sight. Anxious and fearful for themselves, they sought for them in the dreams of poetic illusion, and followed them in the gloomy visions of unenlightened fancy. They found that life was filled with vanity and sorrow; they knew not but death would extinguish their existence, or transmit them to still greater misery. They had just light enough dimly to show them the Judge of the universe seated on his throne, in wrath, clouded with darkness, and beset with judgments. They had no certain access to him—no acceptable worship to pay him—no assurance that their prayers would be answered, or their sins forgiven them. They saw not the issue of things, nor could they take any lengthened view of futurity. They knew not, therefore, how to cherish any great hopes, to form any high and extensive plans; they were confined to the present moment, and all beyond it was covered with confusion and horror. You will not, my brethren, think this description overwrought, if you read the first chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

Herein then appears the supreme excellence of the Christian dispensation. In the midst of this darkness, it rises like the sun in its strength, and all these gloomy shades melt away, and are lost in the brightness of it. It no longer leaves us to the conjectures of reason, which has always erred, nor to the fluctuating opinions of men; but all it declares it confirms by the authority of God. The truths it discovers were proclaimed by the Son of God himself, who lay in the bosom of his Father from eternity, who was acquainted with all his counsels, and created all his works. It raises no hopes within but what are built upon the promise and oath of Him who cannot lie. In the mystery of Christ's incarnation, who was God as well as man, in the humiliation of his life, and in his death upon the cross, we behold the most stupendous instance of compassion; while at the same moment the law of God received more honour than it could have done by the obedience and death of any, or of all his creatures. *Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.* In this dispensation of his grace he has reached so far beyond our highest hopes that, if we love him, we may be assured that he will with it freely give us all things. Access to God is now opened at all times, and from all places; and to such as sincerely ask it, he has promised his Spirit to teach them to pray, and to help their infirmities. The sacrifice of Christ has rendered it just for him to forgive sin; and whenever we are led to repent of and to forsake it, even the *righteousness* of God is declared in the pardon of it. Dear brethren, consolation pours itself in on every side while we contemplate the gospel, and refreshes our inmost souls. It gives us the prospect of our sins being pardoned—our prayers accepted—our very afflictions

turned into blessings—and our existence prolonged to an endless duration. We see Christianity indeed, as yet but in its infancy. It has not already reached the great ends it is intended to answer, and to which it is constantly advancing At present it is but as *a grain of mustard-seed*, and seems to bring forth a tender and weakly crop; but, be assured, it is of God's own right-hand planting, and he will never suffer it to perish It will soon stretch its branches to the river, and its shade to the ends of the earth. The weary will repose themselves under it; the hungry will partake of its fruits; and its leaves will be for the healing of the nations.

You, dear brethren, who profess the name of Jesus, will delight in contemplating the increase and grandeur of his kingdom, and your expectations will not deceive you. *He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.* The religion of Jesus is not the religion of one age or of one nation. It is a train of light first put in motion by God, and which will continue to move and to spread till it has filled the whole earth with its glory. Its blessings will descend, and its influence will be felt, to the latest generations. Uninterrupted in its course, and boundless in its extent, it will not be limited by time or space. The earth is too narrow for the display of its effects and the accomplishment of its purposes. It points forward to an eternity. The great Redeemer will again appear upon the earth as the judge and ruler of it; will send forth his angels, and gather his elect from the four winds; will abolish sin, and death, and hell, and will place the righteous for ever in the presence of his God and their God, of his Father and their Father. If such be our religion, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness? You are conscious that a mere belief of the Christian revelation will not purify the heart or regulate the conduct. We may calmly assent to the most interesting and solemn truths of Christianity, and afterward suffer them to slide out of our minds without leaving any impression behind them. If we look back upon the usual course of our feelings, we shall find that we are more influenced by the frequent recurrence of objects than by their weight and importance; and that habit has more force in forming our characters than our opinions have. The mind naturally takes its tone and complexion from what it habitually contemplates. Hence it is that the world, by continually pressing upon our senses, and being ever open to our view, takes so wide a sway in the heart. How, think you, dear brethren, must we correct this influence, and by faith overcome the world, unless we habitually turn our attention to religion and eternity? Let us beseech you then to make them familiar with your minds, and mingle them with the ordinary stream of your thoughts: retiring often from the world, and conversing with God and your own souls. In these solemn moments, nature, and the shifting scenes of it, will retire from your view, and you will feel yourselves left alone with God; you will walk as in his sight; you will stand, as it were, at his tribunal. Illusions will then vanish apace, and every thing will appear in its true proportion and proper colour. You will estimate human life, and the worth of it, not

by fleeting and momentary sensations, but by the light of serious reflection and steady faith. You will see little in the past to please, or in the future to flatter: its feverish dreams will subside, and its enchantment be dissolved. It is much, however, if faith do not, upon such occasions, draw aside the veil which rests on futurity, and cut short the interval of expectation. How often has she borne aloft the spirits of good men, and given them a vision of better days and brighter hopes! They have entered already the rest which remained for them; they have *come to an innumerable company of angels, to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to God the judge of all.* From these seasons of retirement and religious meditation you will return to the active scenes of life with greater advantage. From the presence of God you will come forth with your passions more composed, your thoughts better regulated, and your heart more steady and pure. Do not imagine that the benefit of such exercises is confined to the moments which are spent in them; for as the air retains the smell, and is filled with the fragrance of leaves which have been long shed, so will these meditations leave a sweet and refreshing influence behind them.

If your religion be genuine, it will be often the source of the warmest and most interesting feelings. It will be a spring of consolation within, which will often be full, and pour itself forth. If the gospel has not taken a share in the feelings of our hearts, if it has not moved the great springs of our hopes and fears, we may be assured we have never experienced its force. It is filled with such views as cannot fail to interest and transport us. Besides, if we do not feel the gospel as well as believe it, how can it support against the overwhelming influence of what we *do* feel? The world steals upon us, and engages our affections on all sides. Its prospects enrapture, and its pleasures are seducing us. Will a religion which rests only upon opinion, and a conviction at times extorted from us, keep us firm against those assaults, and stem the force of a torrent which never ceases to flow? This can be done only by opposing hope to hope, feeling to feeling, and pleasure to pleasure.

Perhaps one of the chief reasons why Christianity does not more purify our hearts is, that we are apt to confine it to seasons of worship, and to shut it out from the ordinary concerns of life. It is a great and fatal mistake to imagine them so separate that we can innocently and usefully engage in the one without any regard had to the other. Our temporal affairs should never, indeed, be suffered to mingle with the exercises of religion; but religion should always regulate the conduct of our temporal affairs. And the reason of this is obvious. *The world and the fashion of it is passing away*, and our union with it will soon be dissolved; while the relation which we bear to God and to eternity is ever the same, and extends to all times and to all places The character which, as Christians, we sustain is our high character; and the hopes which, as such, we indulge are our high hopes. It is but reasonable, it is but just, therefore, that a desire of discharging the one and attaining the other should sway the *whole* of our conduct. Perhaps you will be ready to think that this advice is impracticable

You will urge the necessity of attending to your worldly callings, which, you will say, cannot be carried on unless you give them the greater part of your time and attention. Be it so. Remember, we do not advise you to spend more of your *time* in religion than in your ordinary concerns. This would extinguish all human industry. But if you be sincere in your profession of religion you will regulate your pursuits by it, and engage no farther in any of them than is consistent with the spirit of it. In the midst of all your other concerns you will still make religion the centre of your hopes and the consummation of your wishes. An ordinary mechanic devotes more of his time to the labour of his hands than to any other concern; but it is not his laborious employment that interests his heart; it is his desire of procuring subsistence and of warding off the inconveniences of poverty and want.

Finally, brethren, let each of us examine ourselves whether we be in the faith or not; let us not shrink from the severest test to which conscience and the word of God can put us. If we be, indeed, found sincere, after thus searching our hearts, our faith will grow more firm and our consolations more steady; or if it appear that we have been hitherto deceiving and deceived, (awful idea!) we shall at least have an opportunity of once more lifting up our eyes for mercy, and of reading our danger in our sin, not in our punishment. *But we hope better things of you, brethren, and things which accompany salvation.* We hope that you have fled *from the wrath to come*, and have *laid hold on eternal life;* and we rejoice in the prospect of meeting you in a much larger assembly at the great day, when you shall have washed your robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Then, *brought out of much tribulation*, and *redeemed from every nation, and tongue, and people*, his elect shall be gathered, he shall give up the kingdom to his God, and God shall be all in all. Alas! the voice of individual praise is weak and feeble; but how will our hearts swell with adoration and delight, when, while we are praising him, he shall receive from millions of beings and millions of worlds the same incense!

ON THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:

THE

CIRCULAR LETTER

FROM THE

MINISTERS AND MESSENGERS OF THE SEVERAL BAPTIST CHURCHES

OF THE

Northamptonshire Association.

[Written in 1809.]

ON THE

WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

DEAR BRETHREN,

The subject to which we would invite your attention on the present occasion is *the influence of the Spirit;* which it is not our design to discuss in a doctrinal manner (taking it for granted you are already established in the belief of a divine agency on the soul, and have a competent acquaintance with its nature and effects), but rather with a view to assist you in making a suitable improvement of what you already acknowledge and believe. Assuming it on the ground of revelation for an undoubted fact, that there is an operation of the Holy Ghost to which the regeneration and growth in holiness of every Christian is to be primarily imputed, and that without it nothing can be done or attained to any important purpose in religion,—we request your candid attention to a few hints respecting the most likely method of securing and perpetuating that blessed influence. To this we are the more encouraged by remarking the numerous cautions, warnings, and advices with which the mention of this subject is joined in the sacred writings; sufficient to show that the doctrine of which it treats is a practical doctrine, not designed to supersede the use of means or the exercise of our rational powers;-but rather to stimulate us to exertion, and teach us how to exert them aright. *If ye live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit. Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, by which ye are sealed to the day of redemption.*

The Spirit, we must remember, is a most free agent, and though he will not utterly forsake the work of his hands, he may be expected to withdraw himself in a great measure on being slighted, neglected, or opposed; and as our holiness and comfort depend entirely upon him, it is important for us to know what deportment is calculated to invite and what to repel his presence.

1. If we would wish for much of the presence of God by his Spirit, we must learn to set a high value upon it. The first communication of spiritual influence is, indeed, imparted without this requisite; for it can only be possessed in any adequate degree by those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious. *I am found of them that sought me not.* But in subsequent donations the Lord seems very much to regulate his conduct by a rule,—that of bestowing his richest favours where he knows they are most coveted, and will be most prized The prin-

ciple whence divine communications flow is free, unmerited benignity; but in the mode of dispensing its fruits, it is worthy of the Supreme Ruler to consult his majesty, by withholding a copious supply till he has excited in the heart a profound estimation of his gifts.

No words are adequate to express the excellence and dignity of the gift of the divine Spirit. While Solomon was dedicating the temple, his great soul appears to have been put into a rapture at the very idea, that He whom the heaven of heavens could not contain should deign to dwell with man upon the earth. How much more should each of us be transported when he finds the idea realized, by his own heart having become the seat of the divine presence! There are two considerations drawn from Scripture which assist us in forming a conception of the magnitude of this blessing.

The first is, that it is the great promise of the Christian dispensation, and stands in nearly the same relation to us that the coming of the Messiah did to pious Jews. They waited for the consolation of Israel in the birth of Christ; and now that event is past we are waiting in a similar manner for the promise of the Spirit, of which the church has hitherto enjoyed but the first fruits. To this the Saviour, after his resurrection, pointed the expectation of his apostles as emphatically the promise of the Father, which they were to receive at the distance of a few days; and when it was accomplished at the day of Pentecost, we find Peter insisting on it as the most illustrious proof of his ascension, as well as the chief fruit that converts were to reap from their repentance and baptism. *Repent and be baptized*, said he, *every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost: for the promise* (that is, the promise of the Spirit) *is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord your God shall call.* The apostle Paul places it in a similar light when he tells us, *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the gentiles:* and in what that blessing consists he informs us, by adding, *that we might receive the promise of the Spirit by faith.* On this account, probably, he is styled the *Spirit of promise, that Spirit of promise, the Spirit so often promised;* in the communication of whom the promises of God so centre that it may be considered as the sum and substance of all the promises.

Another consideration which evinces the supreme importance of this gift is, that in the esteem of our Lord it was more than a compensation to his disciples for the loss of his bodily presence; so much superior to it, that he tells them it was expedient he should leave them in order to make way for it:—*If I go not away, the Spirit will not come; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.* Great as the advantages they derived from his society were, they yet remained in a state of minority; their views were contracted, their hearts full of earthly adhesions, and a degree of carnality and prejudice attended them, which it was the office of the Spirit only to remove. From his more ample and effectual teaching a great increase of knowledge was to

accrue, to qualify them for their work of bearing witness to Christ, and a powerful energy to go forth which was to render their ministry, though in themselves so much inferior, far more successful than the personal ministry of our Lord. In consequence of his agency, the apostles were to become enlightened and intrepid, and the world convinced. *I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now. But when the Spirit of truth is come, he will lead you into all truth. He will convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.* Accordingly, after his descent, we find the apostles strangely transformed: an unction, a fervour, a boldness marked their character to which they had hitherto been strangers; and such conviction attended their preaching, that in a short time a great part of the world sunk under the weapons of their holy warfare Nor is there any pretence for alleging that this communication was confined to miraculous gifts, since it is asserted to be that Spirit which should abide in them for ever, and by which the church should be distinguished from the world. He is styled *the Spirit of truth, whom the world could not receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but*, it is added, *ye know him, for he dwelleth in you, and shall be in you.*

As we are indebted to the Spirit for the first formation of the divine life, so it is he who alone can maintain it and render it strong and vigorous. It is his office to actuate the habits of grace where they are already planted; to hold our souls in life, and to *strengthen us that we may walk up and down in the name of the Lord.* It is his office to present the mysteries of salvation, the truths which relate to the mediation of Christ and the riches of his grace, in so penetrating and transforming a manner as to render them vital, operating principles, the food and the solace of our spirits. Without his agency, however intrinsically excellent, they will to us be mere dead speculation, an inert mass: it is only when they are animated by his breath that they become spirit and life.

It is his office to afford that anointing by which we may know all things; not only by a light which is merely directive to the understanding, but which so shines upon the heart as to give a relish of the sweetness of divine truth, and effectually produce a compliance with its dictates. It belongs to him *to seal us to the day of redemption;* to put that mark and character upon us which distinguishes the children of God, as well as to afford a foretaste and an earnest of the future inheritance. *And hereby*, saith an apostle, *we know that we are of God, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* It is his office to subdue the corruption of our nature, not by leaving us inactive spectators of the combat, but by engaging us to a determined resistance to every sinful propensity, by teaching our hands to war and our fingers to fight, so that the victory shall be ours and the praise his. *To help the infirmities of saints, who know not what to pray for as they ought, by making intercession for them with groanings which cannot be uttered*, is an important branch of his office. He kindles their desires, gives them a glimpse of the fulness of God, that all-comprehending good; and by exciting a relish of the beauties of holiness, and the ineffable

pleasure which springs from nearness to God, disposes them to the fervent and effectual prayer which availeth much. In short, as Christ is the way, so it is equally certain that the Spirit is the fountain of all the light and strength which enable us to walk in that way. Lest it should be suspected that in ascribing so much to the agency of the Spirit we diminish the obligations we owe to the Redeemer, it may not be improper to remark, that the tendency of what we have advanced, rightly understood, will be just the contrary, since the Scriptures constantly remind us that the gift of the Holy Ghost is the fruit of his mediation and the purchase of his death. It was his interposing as *Emanuel*, *God with us*, to repair the breach between man and God, that prevailed upon the Father to communicate the Spirit to such as believe on him, and to intrust the whole agency of it to his hands. As the reward of his sufferings he ascended on high, and received gifts for men, of which the right of bestowing the Spirit is the principal, that the Lord God might dwell among them. The bestowment, in every instance, through the successive periods of the church, looks back to the death of the Redeemer as the root and principle whence it takes its rise, and consequently is calculated to enlarge our conceptions of his office and character, as the copiousness of the streams evinces the exuberance of the fountain. To him the Spirit was first given above measure; in him it resides as in an inexhaustible spring, to be imparted in the dispensation of his gospel to every member of his mystical body, in pursuance of the purpose of his grace, and the ends of his death. It is *his* Spirit, called *the supply of the Spirit of Christ Jesus*, not only by reason of the essential union which subsists between the persons of the Godhead, but because the right of bestowing it was ascertained to him in the covenant of redemption.

2. If we would wish to enjoy much of the light and influence of the Spirit, we must seek it by fervent prayer. There are peculiar encouragements held out in the word of God to this purpose. *Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* To illustrate the readiness of our heavenly Father to bestow this blessing, our Lord borrows a comparison from the instinct of parental affection, which prompts a parent to give with alacrity good things to his children. He will not merely supply his wants, which benevolence might prompt him to do with respect to a stranger, but he will do it with feelings peculiar to the parental relation, and will experience as much pleasure in conferring as the child in receiving his favours. It is thus with our heavenly Father: he delights in exercising kindness to his children, and especially in promoting their spiritual welfare. He gives not merely with the liberality of a prince, but with the heart of a father. It is worth remarking, that in relating the preceding discourse, while one evangelist makes express mention of the Spirit, another speaks only of good things, intimating that the communications of the Spirit comprehend whatever is good. Other things may or may not be ultimately beneficial: they are either of a doubtful nature in themselves, or are rendered so by the propensity our corruption gives us to abuse them. But the influence of the Spirit,

by its efficacy in subduing that corruption, must be invariably beneficial: it is such an immediate emanation from God, the fountain of blessedness, that it can never fail of being intrinsically, essentially, and eternally good. It is also deserving our attention, that the injunction of seeking it by prayer is prefaced by a parable constructed on purpose to teach us the propriety of urging our suit with importunity. In imploring other gifts (which we are at liberty to do with submission,) it is still a great point of duty to moderate our desires, and to be prepared for a disappointment, because, as we have already remarked, it is possible the things we are seeking may neither conduce to the glory of God nor to our ultimate benefit, for who knoweth what is good for a man all the days of this his vain life? But when we present our requests for a larger measure of his grace we labour under no such uncertainty, we may safely let forth all the ardour and vehemence of our spirits, since our desires are fixed upon what is the very knot and juncture where the honour of God and the interests of his creatures are indissolubly united. Desires after grace are, in fact, desires after God; and how is it possible they can be too vehement or intense, when directed to such an object? His gracious presence is not like the limited goods of this life, fitted to a particular crisis, or adapted to a special exigency in a fluctuating scene of things; it is alike suited to all times and seasons, the food of souls, the proper good of man under every aspect of Providence, and even the exchange of worlds. *My soul*, said David, *panteth after God, yea, for the living God. My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.* The most eminent effusions of the Spirit we read of in Scripture were not only afforded to prayer, but appear to have taken place at the very time that exercise was performed. The descent of the Holy Ghost, at the day of Pentecost, was while the disciples were with one accord in one place; and after the imprisonment of Peter and John, who being dismissed, went to their own company, *While they prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken with a mighty wind, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.* When a new heart and a new spirit are promised in Ezekiel, it is added, *I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.*

3. Habitual dependence on divine influence is an important duty. This may be considered as opposed to two things; first, to depending on ourselves, to the neglect of divine agency; next, to despondency and distrust. When the Holy Spirit has condescended to take the conduct of souls, it is unquestionably great presumption to enter upon duty in the same manner as if no such assistance were needed or to be expected; and the result will be as with Samson who said, *I will go forth and shake myself, as in time past, while he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.* It is one thing to acknowledge a dependence on heavenly influence in speculation, and another thing so to realize and to feel it as to say from the heart, *I will go in the strength of the Lord God.* A mere assent to this proposition, that the Spirit must concur in the production of every good work (an assent not easily withheld without rejecting the Scriptures), falls very short of the prac-

tical homage due from feeble worms to so great an Agent; and a most solemn and explicit acknowledgment of entire dependence may reasonably be expected. When you engage in prayer or in any other duty, endeavour to enter upon it with a serious and deliberate recollection of your need of the Spirit. Let the consciousness of your weakness and insufficiency for every good work be a sentiment rendered familiar to your minds and deeply impressed on your hearts.

But while we recommend this, there is another extreme against which we think it our duty to guard you, and that is, a disposition to despondency and distrust. We are most ready to acknowledge that the assistance you need is most free and gratuitous, neither given to our deservings nor flowing from any natural connexion subsisting between our endeavours and the exertion of divine agency. The Spirit of God is a free Spirit; and it is impossible to conceive how either faith or prayer should have an intrinsic efficacy in drawing down influence from heaven. There is, however, a connexion established by divine vouchsafement, which entitles believers to expect, in the use of means, such measures of gracious assistance as are requisite to sustain and support them in their religious course. The Spirit is spoken of as the matter of promise to which every Christian is encouraged to look: *the promise is to you and to your children, and to as many as the Lord your God shall call.* Agreeable to this, it is represented as the express purpose of Christ's becoming a curse for us, that the *promise of the Spirit might come on the gentiles through faith.* The same expectation is justified by the Saviour's own declaration, when on the last and great day of the feast he stood and cried, *Whoever is athirst, let him come unto me and drink; for he that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This,* says the evangelist, *he spoke of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.*

The readiness of the Holy Ghost to communicate himself to true believers is also evinced by the tenor of evangelical precepts: *be ye strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.* To command a person to be strong seems strange and unusual language, but is sufficiently explained when we reflect, that a portion of spiritual power is ready to be communicated to those who duly seek it: *be ye filled with the Spirit,* which is the exhortation of the same apostle, takes it for granted that a copious supply is at hand, sufficient to satiate the desires of the saints. We are at a loss to account for such precepts, without supposing an established connexion between the condition of believers and the further communication of divine influence. To the same purpose Paul speaks with apostolic authority, *this I say, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh;* and Jude inculcates the duty of praying in the Spirit, which would be strange if no assistance were to be obtained; and as prayer is a duty of daily occurrence, the injunction implies that it is ready to be imparted to Christians, not by fits and starts, or at distant intervals, but in a stated, regular course.

For this reason, when we hear Christians complaining of the habitual withdrawment of the divine presence, we are under the necessity of

ascribing it to their own fault: not that we mean to deny there is much of sovereignty in this affair, or that *the Spirit, like the wind, bloweth where it listeth.* But it should be remembered, we are now adverting to the situation of real believers, who are entitled to the promise; and though it is probable there is much of sovereignty exercised even with respect to *them*, we apprehend it rather concerns those influences which are consolatory than such as are sanctifying; though there is a degree of satisfaction intermingled with every exercise of genuine piety, yet it is manifest some influences of the Spirit tend more immediately to comfort, others to purification. Some are engaged in the fixed contemplation of objects which exist out of ourselves, the perfections of God, the excellency of Christ, the admirable constitution of the gospel, accompanied with a delightful conviction of a personal interest in whatever comes under our view; the natural fruit of which is *joy unspeakable and full of glory.* By others, we are more immediately impressed with a lasting sense of our extreme unworthiness, and made to mourn over remaining corruption and the criminal defects inherent in our best services.

In the midst of such exercises, it is possible hope may languish and comfort be reduced to a low ebb, yet the divine life may be still advancing and the soul growing in humility, deadness to the world, and the mortification of her own will, as the sap during winter retires to the root of the plant, ready to ascend and produce verdure and beauty on the return of spring. *This is the will of God, even our sanctification;* and though he delights in comforting his people at proper seasons, he is much less intent on this than in promoting their spiritual improvement, to which, in this their probationary state, every thing is made subservient. Let us not then confound the decay of consolation with the decay of piety, nor imagine we can want the aids necessary to prevent the latter, unless we have forfeited them by presumption, negligence, and sloth. Whenever Christians sensibly decline in religion, they ought to charge themselves with the guilt of having grieved the Spirit; they should take the alarm, *repent and do their first works;* they are suffering under the rebukes of that paternal justice which God exercises in his own family. Such a measure of gracious assistance in the use of means, being by the tenor of the new covenant *ascertained* to real Christians, as is requisite for their comfortable walk with God, to find it withheld should engage them in deep searchings of heart, and make them fear lest *a promise being left them of entering into rest, they should appear to come short of it.* But this leads us to observe, in the last place, that,

4. If we wish to enjoy the light of the Spirit, we must take care to maintain a deportment suited to the character of that divine agent. When the apostle exhorts us not to *grieve the Spirit of God, by which we are sealed to the day of redemption*, it is forcibly implied that he is susceptible of offence, and that to offend him involves heinous ingratitude and folly: ingratitude, for what a requital is this for being sealed to the day of redemption! and folly, inasmuch as we may fitly say on this, as Paul did on a different occasion, *Who is he that maketh us glad.*

but the same that is made sorry by us? Have we any other comforter when he is withdrawn? Is there a single ray of light can visit us in his absence, or can we be safe for a moment without his guidance and support? If the immense and infinite Spirit, by a mysterious condescension, deigns to take the conduct of a worm, ought it not to yield the most implicit submission? The appropriate duty owing to a faithful and experienced guide is a ready compliance with his dictates; and how much more may this be expected when the disparity between the parties in question is no less than infinite? The language of the Holy Ghost, in describing the manners of the ancient Israelites, is awfully monitory to professors of religion in every age; *they rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit, therefore he turned to be their enemy, and fought against them.* As we wish to avoid whatever is more curious than useful, we shall not stay to inquire precisely on what occasions or to what extent the Spirit is capable of being resisted: it may be sufficient to observe, it is evident from melancholy experience that it is very possible to neglect what is the obvious tendency of his motions, which is invariably to produce universal holiness. *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, meekness, gentleness, temperance, faith:* whatever is contrary to these involves an opposition to the Spirit, and is directly calculated to quench his sacred influence. From his descending on Christ in the form of a dove, as well as from many express declarations of Scripture, we may with certainty conclude the indulgence of all the irascible and malignant passions to be peculiarly repugnant to his nature; and it is remarkable, that the injunction of not grieving the Holy Spirit is immediately followed by a particular caution against cherishing such dispositions; *let all bitterness and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.* Have you not found by experience that the indulgence of the former has destroyed that self-recollection and composure which are so essential to devotion? Vindictive passions surround the soul with a sort of turbulent atmosphere, than which nothing can be conceived more opposite to that calm and holy light in which the blessed Spirit loves to dwell. The indulgence of sensual lusts, or of whatever enslaves the soul to the appetites of the body, in violation of the rules of sobriety and chastity, it seems almost unnecessary to add, must have a direct tendency to quench his sacred influences; wherever such desires prevail, they war against the soul, immerse it in carnality, and utterly indispose it to every thing spiritual and heavenly. *That which is born of the Spirit is spirit;* it bears a resemblance to its Author in being a spiritual production, which requires to be nourished by divine meditation, by pure and holy thoughts.

If you wish to live in the fellowship of the Spirit, you must guard with no less care against the encroachments of worldly-mindedness, recollecting we are Christians just as far as our treasures and our hearts are placed in heaven and no farther. A heart overcharged with the cares of this world is as disqualified for converse with God

and for walking in the Spirit, as by surfeiting and drunkenness; to which, by their tendency to intoxicate and stupify, they bear a great resemblance.

How many, by an immoderate attachment to wealth and by being determined at all events to become rich, *have fallen into divers foolish and hurtful lusts, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows!* and where the result has not been so signally disastrous, a visible languor in religion has ensued, the friendship of serious Christians been shunned, and the public ordinances of religion attended with little fruit or advantage. As it is the design of the Spirit, in his sacred visitations, to form us for an habitual converse with spiritual and eternal objects, nothing can tend more directly to contract it than to bury our souls in earth: it is as impossible for the eye of the mind as for that of the body to look opposite ways at once; nor can we aim at *the things which are seen and temporal*, but by losing sight of those *which are unseen and are eternal.*

But though a general attention to the duties of piety and virtue, and careful avoidance of the sins opposed to these, is certainly included in a becoming deportment to the Holy Spirit, perhaps it is not *all* that is included. The children of God are characterized in Scripture by their being *led by the Spirit: led*, evidently not impelled, not driven forward in a headlong course, without choice or design; but being, by the constitution of their nature, rational and intelligent, and by the influence of grace rendered spiritual, they are disposed to obey at a touch, and to comply with the gentler insinuations of divine grace; they are ready to take that precise impression which corresponds with the mind and purpose of the Spirit. You are aware of what consequence it is in worldly concerns to embrace opportunities and to improve critical seasons; and thus, in the things of the Spirit, there are times peculiarly favourable, moments of happy visitation, where much more may be done towards the advancement of our spiritual interest than usual. These are gales of the Spirit, unexpected influences of light and of power, which no assiduity in the means of grace can command, but which it is a great point of wisdom to improve. If the husbandman is attentive to the vicissitudes of weather and the face of the sky, that he may be prepared to take the full benefit of every gleam of sunshine and every falling shower, how much more alert and attentive should we be in watching for those influences from above which are necessary to ripen and mature a far more precious crop! As the natural consequence of being long under the guidance of another is a quick perception of his meaning, so that we can meet his wishes before they are verbally expressed, something of this ready discernment, accompanied with instant compliance, may reasonably be expected from those who profess to be habitually led by the Spirit.

The design of his operation is in one view invariably the same—the production of holiness; but the branches of which that consists and the exercises of mind which are rendered subservient to it are various; and he who is intent on walking in the Spirit will be careful to fall in with that train of thought and cherish that cast of reflection to which

he is especially invited. For want of more docility in this respect it is probable we have often sustained loss. Permit us here to suggest two or three heads of inquiry. You have sometimes felt a peculiar seriousness of mind; the delusive glare of worldly objects has faded away, or become dim before your eyes, and death and eternity, appearing at the door, have filled the whole field of vision. Have you improved such seasons for fixing those maxims and establishing those practical conclusions which may produce an habitual sobriety of mind, when things appear under a different aspect? You have sometimes found, instead of a reluctance to pray, a powerful persuasion to that exercise, so that you felt as if you could do nothing else. Have you always complied with these motions, and suffered nothing but the claims of absolute necessity to divert you from pouring out your hearts at the throne of grace? The Spirit is said to make intercession for saints with groanings which cannot be uttered. When you have felt those ineffable longings after God, have you indulged them to the utmost? Have you stretched every sail, launched forth into the deep of the divine perfections and promises, and possessed yourselves as much as possible of the fulness of God? There are moments when the conscience of a good man is more tender, has a nicer and more discriminating touch than usual; the evil of sin in general and of his own in particular appears in a more pure and piercing light. Have you availed yourselves of such seasons as these for searching into the chambers of imagery, and while you detected greater and greater abominations, been at pains to bring them out and slay them before the Lord? Have such visitations effected something towards the mortification of sin; or have they been suffered to expire in mere ineffectual resolutions? The fruits which godly sorrow produced in the Corinthians were thus beautifully portrayed: *What carefulness it wrought in you, yea what clearing of yourselves, yea what indignation, yea what fear, yea what vehement desire, yea what revenge.* There are moments in the experience of a good man when he feels a more than ordinary softness of mind; the frost of selfishness dissolves, and his heart flows forth in love to God and his fellow-creatures. How careful should we be to cherish such a frame, and to embrace the opportunity of subduing resentments, and of healing those sore wounds which it is scarcely possible to avoid in passing through this unquiet world!

There is a holy skill in turning the several parts of Christian experience to account, analogous to what the votaries of the world display in the improvement of every conjuncture from which it is possible to derive any emolument; and though the end they propose is mean and contemptible, the steadiness with which they pursue it, and their dexterity in the choice of means, deserve imitation. In these respects *they are wiser in their generation than the children of light.*

Do not allow yourselves to indulge in religious sloth, or to give way to the solicitations of the tempter from a confidence in the safety of your state, or in your spiritual immunities as Christians. The habitual prevalence of such a disposition will afford a much stronger proof of insincerity than any arguments which can be adduced for the

contrary, and admitting your pretensions to piety to be ever so valid, a little reflection may convince you that a careless and negligent course will lay you open to the severest rebukes. *You only have I known* (says the Lord by the prophet) *among all the families of the earth, therefore will I visit you for all your iniquities.*

Remember, dear brethren, we profess a peculiar relation to God as his children, his witnesses, his people, his temple; the character of that glorious Being, and of his religion, will be contemplated by the world chiefly through the medium of our spirit and conduct, which ought to display, as in a mirror, the virtues of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. It is strictly appropriate to the subject of our present meditations to remind you that you are temples. *For ye*, says the apostle, *are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* What purity, sanctity, and dignity may be expected in persons who bear such a character! A Christian should look upon himself as something sacred and devoted, so that what involves but an ordinary degree of criminality in others in him partakes of the nature of sacrilege; what is a breach of trust in others is in him the profanation of a temple. Let us, dear brethren, watch and pray that nothing may be allowed a place in our hearts that is not suitable to the residence of the holy and blessed God. Finally, *having such great and precious promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.*

ON HEARING THE WORD:

THE

CIRCULAR LETTER

FROM THE

MINISTERS AND MESSENGERS OF THE BAPTIST CHURCHES

OF THE

Northamptonshire Association

[WRITTEN IN 1813.]

ON HEARING THE WORD.

Dear Brethren,

The subject on which we addressed you at our last anniversary was the proper method of reading the Word of God; as a natural sequel to which, we beg leave on the present occasion to suggest a few hints of advice respecting the duty of hearing it.

Preaching is an ordinance of God not entirely confined to the Christian dispensation. From the Old Testament history it appears that Ezra, upon the return of the Jews from Babylon, assembled them in the streets of Jerusalem, and ascending a stage or pulpit for the advantage of being better seen and heard, read the law in the ears of the people, and *gave the interpretation thereof.* It is probable that he did little more than, agreeable to the natural import of the phrase *interpretation*, translate, paragraph by paragraph, the Hebrew original into the Syriac or Chaldee, which had become, during a captivity of forty years, the vernacular language of the Jews. From that time, however, synagogues were erected in all the cities throughout Judea, and regular officers appointed to read, first the Pentateuch, and after the persecution by Antiochus the Prophets, and explain them in ample paraphrases or comments. Such was the origin of preaching.

When the fulness of time was come for God, in his infinite mercy, to send forth his Son, his appearance was first announced by John's proclaiming in the wilderness, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord;* which, after a short time, was succeeded by the personal ministry of Christ and his apostles, with whom the dispensation of the gospel, properly speaking, commenced. After his resurrection, our Lord extended the commission of the apostles to all nations, saying, *Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;* or, as you have it in Mark, *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*

Upon the formation of Christian churches, an order of men was appointed in each society for the express purpose of preaching the Word and administering the sacraments: wherein the wisdom and kindness of the Great Head of the church is eminently conspicuous; for such are the necessary avocations of life, so little the leisure most Christians possess for the acquisition of knowledge, and such the deficiency of many in the elementary parts of education, that they will always, under God, be chiefly indebted to this appointment for

any extensive acquaintance with divine truth. The privilege of reading the Scriptures in our native language is of inestimable value; but were it much more universal than it is, it would not supersede the necessity of hearing the Word: for there are not only difficulties in the Bible which require to be elucidated, and seeming contradictions to be solved, but the living voice of a preacher is admirably adapted to awaken attention and to excite an interest, as well as to apply the general truths of revelation to the various cases of Christian experience, and the regulation of human conduct. When an important subject is presented to an audience, with an ample illustration of its several parts, its practical improvement enforced, and its relation to the conscience and the heart insisted upon with seriousness, copiousness, and fervour, it is adapted, in the nature of things, to produce a more deep and lasting impression than can usually be expected from reading. He who knows *how forcible are right words*, and how apt man is to be moved by man, has consulted the constitution of our frame, by appointing an order of men whose office it is to address their fellow-creatures on their eternal concerns. Strong feeling is naturally contagious; and if, as the Wise Man observes, *as iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend;* the combined effect of countenance, gesture, and voice, accompanying a powerful appeal to the understanding and the heart, on subjects of everlasting moment, can scarcely fail of being great.

But independently of the natural tendency of the Christian ministry to promote spiritual improvement, it derives a peculiar efficacy from its being a divine appointment. It is not merely a natural, it is also an *instituted* means of good; and whatever God appoints, by special authority, he graciously engages to bless, provided it be attended to with right dispositions and from right motives. The means of grace are, as the words import, the consecrated channels in which his spiritual mercies flow; and as the communication of spiritual blessings always implies an exertion of divine power, so these become the stated instrument or occasion of its exercise. These are emphatically his ways in which he is wont to walk with his people. *Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways.** Though the Spirit bloweth where it listeth, where the gospel is not preached the effects of his operation are rarely to be discerned, and we witness few or no indications of a renewed character out of the bounds of Christendom. From the history of religion, in all ages, it appears that the Spirit is accustomed to follow in the footsteps of his revealed Word; and that, wherever his work lies, he prepares his way by first communicating the Oracles of God. When he proposed to take out a people for his name from among the gentiles, the first step he took was to commission the apostles to preach the gospel to every creature. To this St. Paul most solemnly directs our attention, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, as the grand instrument of human salvation:—*When, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom*

* Isaiah lxiv. 5.

knew not God, it pleased him, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe. So intimate, by divine appointment, is the connexion between the salvation of man and the ministry of the Word, that the method of salvation under the gospel derives from the latter its distinguishing appellation, being denominated the *hearing of faith.* St. Jude, in like manner, asserts it to be the instrumental cause of our regeneration. *Of his own will begat he us by the Word of Truth.* And to the same purpose St. Peter reminds the Christians whom he was addressing, *that they were born not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the word of God; which word,* he adds, *is by the gospel preached unto you.* The *written* Word, we are told, indeed, from the highest authority, is able to make us wise unto salvation, and many pleasing instances of its saving efficacy might be produced to confirm this position; but as the gospel was preached before it was penned, it is certain that most of the passages which speak on this subject are to be referred to its public ministry, and that, in subsequent ages, God has put a distinguishing honour upon it, by employing it as the principal means of accomplishing his saving purposes. There is every reason to suppose that the far greater part of those who have been truly sanctified and enlightened will ascribe the change they have experienced principally to the *hearing of faith.*

What a powerful motive results from thence to take heed how we hear! If we feel any concern for a share in the great salvation, how careful should we be not to neglect the principal means of obtaining it! If there be a class from whom the spiritual beauty and glory of the gospel remain concealed, it consists of a description of persons the very mention of whom ought to make us tremble. *If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.* Let no man allow himself to neglect the hearing of the Word, or hear it in a careless or irreverent manner, under the pretence of his having an opportunity of reading it in private, since its public ministry possesses, with respect to its tendency to excite the attention and interest the heart, many unquestionable advantages; besides, such a pretence will generally be found to be hollow and disingenuous. If you observe a person habitually inattentive under an awakening, searching ministry, follow him into his retirement, and, it may be confidentially predicted, you will seldom see the Bible in his hands; or, if he overcome his aversion to religion so far as occasionally to peruse a chapter, it will be in the same spirit in which he hears: he will satisfy himself with having completed his task, *and straightway go his way and forget what manner of man he was.* If the general course of the world were as favourable to religion as it is the contrary, if an intercourse with mankind were a school of piety, the state of such persons would be less hopeless, and there would be a greater probability of their being gained without the Word; but while every thing around us conspires to render the mind earthly and sensual, and the world is continually moulding and transforming its votaries, the situation of such as attend the means of grace in a careless manner is unspeakably dangerous, since they are continually exposing themselves to influences which corrupt, while

they render themselves inaccessible to such as are of a salutary operation. What can be expected but the death of that patient who takes a course which is continually inflaming his disease, while he despises and neglects the remedy? When we see men attentive under the ministry of the Word, and evidently anxious to comprehend its truths, we cannot but entertain hopes of their salvation; for faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. It is observed of the Jews at Berea, *that they were more noble than those of Thessalonica, because they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so;* and the result was such as might be expected,—a great multitude of them believed. Candid and attentive hearers place themselves, so to speak, in the way of the Spirit: while those who cannot be prevailed upon to give it serious attention may most justly be said to *put the kingdom of God far from them, and judge themselves unworthy of eternal life.* To such the awful threatenings recorded in the Proverbs are most applicable;—*Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.* In such cases, the ministers of the gospel can do little more than, like Jeremiah, retire to *weep in secret places for their pride.*

But as we who are assembled on the present occasion consist of ministers and delegates from a number of associated churches, which we consider ourselves as addressing in these our circular epistles, we shall confine ourselves, in our subsequent remarks, to such heads of advice on the duty of hearing the Word as are appropriate to the character of professing Christians. We will consider ourselves as addressing such, and such only, as must be supposed, in a judgment of charity, to have an experimental acquaintance with Divine truth.

First. Previous to your entering into the house of God, seek *a prepared heart*, and implore the blessing of God on the ministry of his Word. It may be presumed that no real Christian will neglect to preface his attendance on social worship with secret prayer. But let the acquisition of a devout and serious frame, freed from the cares, vanities, and pollutions of the world, accompanied with earnest desires after God and the communications of his grace, form a principal subject of your devotions. Forget not to implore a blessing on the public ministry, that it may accomplish in yourselves, and to others, the great purposes it is designed to answer; and that those measures of assistance may be afforded to your ministers which shall replenish them with light, love, and liberty, that they may speak the mystery of the gospel as it ought to be spoken. Pastors and people would both derive eminent advantages from such a practice; they in their capacity of exhibiting, you in your preparation for receiving, the mysteries of the gospel. As the duties of the closet have the happiest tendency, by solemnizing and elevating the mind, to prepare for those of the sanctuary, so the conviction of your having borne your minister on your heart before the throne of grace would, apart from every other consideration, dispose him to address you with augmented zeal and tenderness. We should consider it as such a token

for good, as well as such an unequivocal proof of your attachment, as would greatly animate and support us under all our discouragements.

Secondly. Establish in your minds the highest *reverence and esteem* of the glorious gospel. Recollect the miracles wrought to confirm it; the sanction, the awful sanction, by which a due reception of it is enforced, and the infinite value of that blood by which its blessings were ratified and procured. Recollect that on its acceptance or rejection, on the effects which it produces on the heart and life, depends our state for eternity; since there are no other means devised for our recovery, no other name given under heaven by which we can be saved, besides that which it exhibits. It is not merely the incorruptible seed of regeneration; it is also the mould in which our souls must be cast, agreeable to the apostle's beautiful metaphor:—*You have obeyed from the heart that form* (or mould) *of doctrine into which ye were delivered.* In order to our bearing the image of Christ, who is the first-born among many brethren, it is necessary to receive its impress in every part; nor is there any thing in us what it ought to be, any thing truly excellent, but in proportion to its conformity to that pattern. Its operation is not to be confined to time or place; it is the very element in which the Christian is appointed to live, and to receive continual accessions of spiritual strength and purity, until he is presented faultless in the presence of the divine glory. The more you esteem the gospel, the more will you be attached to that ministry in which its doctrines are developed, and its duties explained and inculcated; because, in the present state of the world, it is the chief, though not the only, means of possessing yourselves of its advantages. To tremble at God's word is also mentioned as one of the most essential features in the character of him to whom God will look with approbation.

Thirdly. Hear the Word with *attention.* If you are convinced of the justice of the preceding remarks, nothing further is requisite to convince you of the propriety of this advice, since they all combine to enforce it. We would only remark, in general, that the knowledge derived from a discourse depends entirely upon attention; in exact proportion to which will be the progress made by a mind of a given capacity. Not to listen with attention is the same thing as to have ears which hear not, and eyes which see not. While you are hearing, whatever trains of thought of a foreign and extraneous nature obtrude themselves should be resolutely repelled. In the power of fixing the attention, the most precious of the intellectual habits, mankind differ greatly; but every man possesses some, and it will increase the more it is exerted. He who exercises no discipline over himself in this respect acquires such a volatility of mind, such a vagrancy of imagination, as dooms him to be the sport of every mental vanity; it is impossible such a man should attain to true wisdom. If we cultivate, on the contrary, a habit of attention, it will become natural, thought will strike its roots deep, and we shall, by degrees, experience no difficulty in following the track of the longest connected discourse. As we find it easy to attend to what interests the heart, and the

houghts naturally follow the course of the affections, the best antidote to habitual inattention to religious instruction is the love of the truth. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, and to hear it attentively will be a pleasure, not a task.

The practice of sleeping in places of worship, a practice we believe not prevalent in any other places of public resort, is not only a gross violation of the advice we are giving, but most distressing to ministers, and most disgraceful to those who indulge it. If the apostle indignantly inquires of the Corinthians whether they had not houses to eat and drink in, may we not, with equal propriety, ask those who indulge in this practice whether they have not beds to sleep in, that they convert the house of God into a dormitory? A little self-denial, a very gentle restraint on the appetite, would, in most cases, put a stop to this abomination; and with what propriety can he pretend to desire the sincere milk of the Word who cannot be prevailed upon, one day out of seven, to refrain from the glutting which absolutely disqualifies him for receiving it?

Fourthly. Hear the Word of God with *impartiality.* To be partial in the law was a crime formerly charged upon the Jewish priests; nor is it less sinful in the professors of Christianity. There is a class of hearers who have their favourite topics, to which they are so immoderately attached that they are offended if they are not brought forward on all occasions; while there are others of at least equal importance, which they can seldom be prevailed upon to listen to with patience. Some are never pleased but with doctrinal statements; they are in raptures while the preacher is insisting on the doctrines of grace, and the privileges of God's people; but when he proceeds to inculcate the practical improvement of these doctrines, and the necessity of adorning the profession of them by the virtues of a holy life, their countenances fall, and they make no secret of their disgust. Others are all for practical preaching, while they have no relish for that truth which can alone sanctify the heart. But, as it is a symptom of a diseased state of body to be able to relish only one sort of food, it is not less of the mind to have a taste for only one sort of instruction. It is difficult to suppose that such persons love the Word of God as the Word of God; for, if they did, every part of it, in its due proportion, and its proper place, would be acceptable. It is possible, in consequence of the various exigencies of the Christian life, that there may be seasons to which some views of divine truth may be peculiarly suited, and on that account heard with superior advantage and delight; but this is perfectly consistent with an impartial attachment to the whole of revelation. But to feel an habitual distaste to instruction, the most solid and scriptural, unless it be confined to a few favourite topics, is an infallible indication of a wrong state of mind. It is only by yielding the soul to the impression of every divine communication and discovery, that the several graces which enter into the composition of the new creature are nourished and sustained. As the perfection of the Christian system results from the symmetry of its several parts, in which there is nothing redundant, nothing disproportioned, and nothing

defective; so the beauty of the Christian character consists in its exhibiting an adequate impress and representation of the whole. If there be any particular branch of the Word of God to which we are habitually indisposed, we may generally conclude that is precisely the part which we most need; and, instead of indulging our distaste, we ought seriously to set ourselves to correct the mental disease which has given occasion to it.

In some instances, the partiality to certain views of truth to the exclusion of others, of which we are complaining, may arise, not so much from moral disorder as from a deficiency of religious knowledge, and that contraction of mind which is its usual consequence. We would earnestly exhort persons of this description not to make themselves the standard, nor attempt to confine their ministers to the first principles of the Oracles of God. There are in most assemblies some who are capable of digesting strong meat, whose improvement ought to be consulted; and it behooves such as are not, instead of abridging the provisions of the family, to endeavour to enlarge their knowledge and extend their inquiries. A Christian minister is compared by our Lord to a householder, who brings out of his treasure things new and old.

Fifthly. Hear the Word with constant *self-application.* Hear not for others, but for yourselves. What should we think of a person who, after accepting an invitation to a feast, and taking his place at the table, instead of partaking of the repast amused himself with speculating on the nature of the provisions, or the manner in which they were prepared, and their adaptation to the temperament of the several guests, without tasting a single article? Such, however, is the conduct of those who hear the Word without applying it to themselves, or considering the aspect it bears on their individual character. Go to the house of God with a serious expectation and desire of meeting with something suited to your particular state,—something that shall lay the axe to the root of your corruptions, mortify your easily besetting sin, and confirm the graces in which you are most deficient. A little attention will be sufficient to give you that insight into your character which will teach what you need, what the peculiar temptations to which you are exposed, and on what account you feel most shame and humiliation before God. Every one may know if he pleases the *plague* of his own heart. Keep your eye upon it while you are hearing, and eagerly lay hold upon what is best adapted to heal and correct it. Remember that religion is a personal thing, an individual concern; for every one of us must give an account of himself to God, and every man bear his own burden. *Is not my Word as a fire*, saith the Lord, *as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?* If such be its power and efficacy lay your hearts open to it, and expose them fully to the stroke of the hammer and the action of the fire. Do not imagine, because you are tolerably well acquainted with the system of the gospel, that you have therefore nothing to learn; and that your only obligation to attend its ministry arises from the necessity of setting an example. It is probable your knowledge is much more limited than

you suppose; but, if it be not, it is a great mistake to imagine the only advantage derived from hearing is the acquisition of new truths There is a spiritual perception infinitely more important than the knowledge which is merely speculative. The latter is at most but a means to the former, and this perception is not confined to new propositions. It is frequently, nay more frequently, attached to truths already known; and, when they are faithfully and affectionately exhibited, they are the principal means of calling into action and strengthening the habits of internal grace. Love, joy, humility, heavenly-mindedness, godly sorrow for sin, and holy resolutions against it are not promoted so much by novel speculations as by placing in a just and affecting light the acknowledged truths of the gospel, and thereby stirring up the mind by way of remembrance. *Whilst I am in this tabernacle*, said Peter, *I will not be negligent to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the present truth.* We appeal to the experience of every real Christian, whether the sweetest and most profitable seasons he has enjoyed have not been those in which he is conscious of having learned no new truth, strictly speaking, but was indulged with spiritual and transforming views of the plain, unquestionable discoveries of the gospel. As the Word of God is the food of souls, so it corresponds to that character in this respect among others,—that the strength and refreshment it imparts depend not upon its novelty, but upon the nutritious properties it possesses. It is a sickly appetite only which craves incessant variety.

Sixthly. Hear with *candour.* The indulgence of a nice and fastidious taste is as adverse to the improvement of the hearer as it is to the comfort of the minister. Considering the variety of our avocations, the necessity we are under of addressing you in all states of mind, and sometimes on the most unexpected occasions, if we could not rely on your candour, our situation would be scarcely tolerable. Where the general tendency of a discourse is good, and the instruction delivered weighty and solid, it is the part of candour to overlook imperfections in the composition, manner, or elocution of the speaker; imitating in this respect the example of the Galatians, of whom Paul testifies that they did not despise his temptation, which was in the flesh; some unhappy peculiarity in his speech or countenance, we may suppose, which exposed him to the derision of the unfeeling. The Lord, by the mouth of Isaiah, severely censures such as *make a man an offender for a word*,—a fault too prevalent in many of our churches, especially among such as are the least informed and judicious; for the disposition to sit in judgment upon the orthodoxy of ministers is usually in an inverse proportion to the ability. Be not hasty in concluding that a preacher is erroneous because he may chance to use a word or a phrase not exactly suited to your taste and comprehension. It is very possible the idea it is intended to convey may perfectly accord with your own sentiments; but, if it should not, it is equally possible the propriety of it may be vindicated by considerations with which you are not acquainted. *Be not many masters*, many teachers, saith St. James, *knowing ye shall receive the greater condemnation*

Hear the Word of God less in the spirit of judges than of those who shall be judged by it. If you are not conscious of your need of religious instruction, why elect pastors and teachers for that purpose? But if you are, how inconsistent is it to indulge that spirit of cavil and censure which can have no other effect than to deter your ministers from the faithful discharge of their office, from declaring the whole counsel of God! In most dissenting congregations, there is one or more persons who value themselves on their skill in detecting the unsoundness of ministers; and who when they hear a stranger, attend less with a view to spiritual improvement than to pass their verdict, which they expect shall be received as decisive. It is almost unnecessary to add that they usually consist of the most ignorant, conceited, and irreligious part of the society. Such a disposition should as much as possible be discouraged and suppressed.

Receive with meekness the ingrafted Word, which is able to save your souls. Despise not men of plain talents who preach the truth, and appear to have your eternal welfare at heart. If you choose to converse with your fellow-christians on what you have been hearing, a practice which, if rightly conducted, may be very edifying; let your conversation turn more upon the tendency, the spiritual beauty, and glory of those great things of God which have engaged your attention than on the merit of the preacher. We may readily suppose that Cornelius and his friends, after hearing Peter, employed very few words in discussing the oratorical talents of that great apostle, any more than the three thousand who at the day of Pentecost were pricked to the heart: their minds were too much occupied by the momentous truths they had been listening to, to leave room for such reflections. Yet this is the only kind of religious conversation (if it deserve the appellation) in which too many professors engage. "Give me," says the incomparable Fenelon, "the preacher who imbues my mind with such a love of the Word of God, as makes me desirous of hearing it from any mouth."

When your ministers are exposing a particular vice, and endeavouring to deter from it by the motives which reason and revelation supply, guard against a suspicion of their being *personal*. That they ought not to be so we readily admit; that is, that they ought not to descend to such a minute specification of circumstances as shall necessarily direct the attention to one or more individuals; but if they are not at liberty to point their arrows against particular vices among them, or are expected, lest they should wound, to make a courteous apology, by assuring the audience of their hope and conviction that none among them are implicated, they had better seal up their lips in perpetual silence. It is a most indispensable part of our office to warn sinners of every description; and, that we may not beat the air, to attack particular sins as well as sin in the abstract; and if, without our intending it, an individual suspects he is personally aimed at, he merely bears an involuntary testimony to our fidelity and skill.

Seventhly. Hear the Word with a sincere resolution of *obeying* it. *If ye know these things*, said our Lord, *happy are ye if ye do them.*—

He that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him to a man who built his house upon a rock. To be a forgetful hearer of the Word and not a doer, is to forfeit all the advantages of the Christian dispensation, which is imparted solely with a view to practice. The doctrine of faith is published with a design to produce the obedience of faith in all nations. The doctrine of repentance is nothing more or less than the command of God that all men every where should repent. If we are reminded that *he who in times past spake to the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son*, it is that we may be admonished not to *refuse* him that speaketh. If we are taught the supreme dignity and exaltation of Christ as a Mediator, it is that *every knee may bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord.* If the apostles, having the mind of Christ, faithfully imparted it, it was that the same mind may be in us, to purify our passions and regulate our conduct. We can scarcely imagine a greater impertinence than to hear the Word with apparent seriousness, without intending to comply with its directions. It is a solemn mockery, concealing under an air of reverence and submission a determination to rebel, and, in the language of the prophet, a heart bent on backsliding. To suppose the Supreme Being pleased with such a mode of attendance is to impute to him a conduct which it would be an insult to ascribe to a fellow-creature; for who but the weakest of mortals, under the character of a master or a sovereign, would be gratified with the profound and respectful attention with which his commands were heard, while there existed a fixed resolution not to obey? Remember, dear brethren, the practical tendency of every Christian doctrine: remember that the ministry of the gospel is the appointed instrument of forming the spirits of men to faith and obedience; and that, consequently, the utmost attention and assiduity in hearing it is fruitless and unavailing which fails to produce that effect.

Finally. Be careful, after you have heard the Word, to *retain and perpetuate its impressions.* Meditate, retire, and digest it in your thoughts; turn it into prayer; in a word, spare no pains to fasten it upon your hearts. You have read, dear brethren, of those *to whom the gospel was preached as well as to us, but the Word did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.* Endeavour to exert upon it distinct and vigorous acts of faith, and thereby to mingle and incorporate it with all the powers of the mind and all the springs of action. But this you can never accomplish without deep and serious reflection; for want of which it is too often left loose and exposed like uncovered seed, which the fowls of heaven easily pick up and devour. *Then cometh that wicked one*, says our Lord, *and taketh it out of his heart, and he becometh unfruitful.* How many hearers, by engaging in worldly conversation, or giving way to a vain and unprofitable train of thought, when they leave the sanctuary, lose the impressions they had received, instead of conducting themselves like persons who have just been put in possession of a treasure which they are anxious to secure from depredation! If Satan watches for an opportunity of taking the Word out of our hearts, what remains but that we oppose

vigilance to vigilance, and effort to effort? And since the prize contended for by the powers of darkness is our souls, what a melancholy reflection it will be, if the disinterested malice of our enemies renders them vigilant and active in seeking their destruction, while we are careless and negligent in seeking their salvation! Satan, conscious that the Word of God is capable of elevating us to that pinnacle of happiness whence he fell, contemplates its success with alarm, and spares no artifice or stratagem which his capacious intellect can suggest to obstruct its progress; and if we, by our criminal negligence, turn his ally against ourselves, we shall be guilty of that prodigy of folly and infatuation which is equally condemned by the councils of heaven and the machinations of hell.

ON THE SUBSTITUTION OF THE INNOCENT FOR THE GUILTY.

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT

LUTON, BEDFORDSHIRE,

APRIL 3, 1822.

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

About seven years ago I went down to Leicester at Mr. Hall's especial request, for the purpose of advising with him as to the preparation of a volume of Sermons, an undertaking to which he had then made up his mind. After various conversations we fixed upon twelve, the subjects of which, with their respective modes of discussion and application, he regarded himself as able to recall without much difficulty. Among the sermons then selected was the following, composed in confirmation of a momentous point of Christian doctrine, and which he had preached at Luton, in the spring of 1822. He spoke of it as most readily occurring to his mind in its entire arrangement, and I therefore urged him to commit it to paper as soon as possible. This, there is reason to believe, he accomplished accordingly. But the continued indifferent state of his health, the numerous interruptions to which he was then exposed, and his total inability to satisfy himself in composing for the press, jointly concurred in preventing him from advancing any farther towards the completion of his design.

The manuscript copy of this discourse, in Mr. Hall's own handwriting, has been found since his death: not complete, it is true; but there are only two chasms of importance, and these I have been enabled to fill up by means of the reports of the same sermon which I have received from various friends. Although, therefore, I cannot but regret that the portions alluded to are not given precisely in Mr. Hall's language, yet I trust that nothing essential to the train of argument or to its principal illustrations is omitted.

June, 1831

NOTES OF SERMONS.

A SERMON.

Isaiah liii. 8.

For the transgression of my people was he stricken.

Isaiah has been usually styled the evangelical prophet; and had no other part of his preaching descended to us except the portion before us, it would have sufficiently vindicated the propriety of that appellation. The sufferings of the Messiah are so affectingly portrayed, and their purpose and design so clearly and precisely stated, that we seem to be perusing the writings of an apostle rather than the predictions of a prophet: the obscurity of an ancient oracle brightens into the effulgence of gospel light. In no part of the New Testament is the doctrine of the atonement more unequivocally asserted, and the vicarious nature of our Lord's passion more forcibly inculcated, than in the context of the words selected as the basis of the present discourse.

It may not be improper to premise, that there is reason to believe that the original text has, in this instance, undergone some alteration, and that it anciently stood thus, *he was smitten unto death.* It is thus written by Origen, who assures us that a certain Jew, with whom he disputed, seemed to feel himself more pressed by this expression than by any other part of the chapter. It is thus rendered by the Septuagint in our present copies; and if, in this instance, it had not concurred with the original, neither could Origen* have urged it with good faith nor the Jew have felt himself embarrassed by the argument which it suggested.

The Jews pretend that no single person is designed in this portion of prophecy; but that the people of Israel collectively are denoted under the figure of one man, and that the purport of the chapter is a delineation of the calamities and sufferings which that nation should undergo with a view to its correction and amendment. The absurdity of this evasion will be obvious to him who considers that the person who is represented as *stricken* is carefully distinguished by the prophet from

* See Orig. cont. Cels. lib. i. c 44,· and Kennicott's Observations, quoted by Bishop Lowth in his Notes on Isaiah liii.—Ed.

the people for whose benefit he suffered; *for the transgression of my people was he stricken:* in addition to which he is affirmed to be stricken *even to death*, which, as Origen very properly urged, agrees well with the fate of an individual, but not with that of a people.

In spite of the vain tergiversation of the Jews, and the sophistry, equally impotent, of some who bear the Christian name, this portion of ancient writ will remain an imperishable monument of *the faith once delivered to the saints*, of the harmony subsisting between the Old and the New Testament in relation to the scheme of mediation and the basis of hope.

That the sufferings of the Redeemer were vicarious and piacular, that he appeared in the character of a substitute for sinners, in distinction from a mere example, teacher, or martyr, is so unquestionably the doctrine of the inspired writers, that to deny it is not so properly to mistake as to contradict their testimony; it must be ascribed, not to any obscurity in revelation itself, but to a want of submission to its authority.

The doctrine in question is so often asserted in the clearest terms, and tacitly assumed as a fundamental principle in so many more; it is intermingled so closely with all the statements of truths and inculcations of duty throughout the Holy Scriptures, that to endeavour to exclude it from revelation is as hopeless an attempt as to separate colour from the rainbow or extension from matter.

It is no part of the purpose of this discourse to enter into the proof of the substitution of Christ in the place of sinners, as the defence of that doctrine will frequently engage the attention of every Christian minister.

In addressing those who are thoroughly confirmed in its belief, we may be allowed to proceed on the assumption of its truth, while we endeavour, in dependence on divine assistance, to illustrate the fitness of the scheme of *substitution*, and the indications which it affords of profound and unsearchable wisdom. Difficult as this subject must be allowed to be, I trust an attempt to discuss it, however feeble, is not exposed to the charge of presumption. It is one thing to presume to anticipate the counsels of Heaven, and another, after they are accomplished and exhibited as facts, humbly to explain the wisdom with which they are fraught. To have anticipated the scheme of redemption by previously perceiving that it was, of all possible plans, the fittest to be adopted by a Being of infinite wisdom, was a task to which, it is probable, no finite intellect was adequate; but to perceive some of its congruities, when it is actually laid before us, may demand nothing—

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[*Here there is a chasm in the manuscript: but from the notes of this sermon with which the editor has been supplied, it may be filled as to substance, thus:*—]

To perceive some of its congruities may require but an ordinary degree of talent and discrimination, with an upright desire to learn what

revelation teaches; and is altogether distinct from attempting to be *wise above what is written.*

In endeavouring to show the circumstances which render this extraordinary method of proceeding consistent with the character of God, we only pursue the guidance of the Sacred Writings and find new motives for gratitude to our Heavenly Father for his unspeakable goodness.

Yet every reflecting person must perceive that there is in this doctrine something extremely remote from ordinary apprehension, apart from the instruction derived from Holy Writ. That one of the human race, by submitting to an ignominious and painful death, should be the moral source of the salvation of an innumerable multitude of mankind, and, if duly improved, a sufficient source for the salvation of all, is surely one of the most extraordinary of the divine proceedings with regard to man. Nothing like this has ever existed. It seems to stand by itself an insulated department of Divine Providence, to contain within itself a method of acting which was never seen before, and will never be repeated.

Among men, the substitution of a righteous for a guilty person could rarely occur. There is seldom found sufficient heroism or virtue to induce an individual so to offer himself; such a combination of benevolence and of generous oblivion of self-interest as to induce such a sacrifice.

Nor would it be fit, in ordinary cases, that it should be admitted: for virtuous characters are not sufficiently numerous to admit of such a waste of the valuable elements of society; besides that it would be contrary to all moral economy to admit the violation of law to be pardoned at the expense of such as are its ornaments and blessings. No wise government would permit, to any considerable extent, a proceeding which would tend to continue in existence those who inflict misery on mankind, at the expense of those who are its blessings.

Besides, if this practice were common, even upon the supposition that no crime should pass without being followed by punishment as a necessary result, yet such would be the uncertainty, after crime had been committed, as to who should bear the punishment, as would tend to take away all fear of committing offences. The best provision of wise legislation, which is to prevent crime, not to punish, would thus be removed. It would become a kind of lottery who should suffer, and thus the dread of punishment would be greatly impaired, if not entirely destroyed.

It is evident, therefore, that so far from this being a human device, it could never have been *thought of* as an ordinary mode of procedure. And though there are some traces in history of persons supposed to have presented themselves as vicarious offerings for relatives or connexions, yet they are feebly attested: while among the well-attested records of judicial authority we have *no* instance, probably, of any person who was himself innocent and upright being *admitted* as a substitute in behalf of the guilty. Yet that this is the way in which the Infinite Mind has proceeded in laying the foundation of human

acceptance none can doubt but those who are disposed to torture the plainest expressions.

Let us, therefore, consider what circumstances met in this case, and must be supposed to concur on any occasion of this kind, to render fit and proper the substitution of an innocent person in the place of the guilty; and what is peculiar in the character of our Saviour which renders it worthy of God to set him apart as *a propitiation for the sins of the world*, and annex the blessings of eternal life to such as believe in the doctrine of the cross, and repent and turn to God.

[☞ *We now return to the original copy.*]

Firstly. It is obvious that such a procedure as we are now contemplating, in order to give it validity and effect, must be sanctioned by the Supreme authority. It is a high exertion of the dispensing power, which can issue from no inferior source to that from which the laws themselves emanate.

For a private person, whatever might be his station in society, to pretend to introduce such a commutation of punishment as is implied in such a transaction, would be a presumptuous invasion of legislative rights, which no well-regulated society would tolerate. To attach the penalty to the person of the offender is as much the provision of the law as to denounce it—they are equally component parts of one and the same regulation; and the power of dispensing with the laws is equivalent to the power of legislation. Besides, so many circumstances, rarely if ever combined, must concur to render such a procedure conducive to the ends of justice, that it would be the height of temerity to commit the determination of them to the exercise of private discretion instead of legislative wisdom.

This condition was most unequivocally satisfied in the mystery of Christ's substitution. When he undertook to *bear our sins in his own body on the tree*, he contracted no private engagement without the consent and approbation of his heavenly Father. If he *gave himself for our sins, to redeem us from the present evil world*, it was *according to the will of God, even our Father.* On every occasion he reminds us that he did nothing from himself, but that only which the Father had commissioned him to do. *I have power*, said he, *to lay down my life, and power to take it up again; this commandment received I of my Father. Hereafter I will not talk much with you, for the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me; but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, so I do, Arise, let us go hence. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.**

* See John x. 18 to John xiv. 31; 1 John iv. 9, 10–14.

These inspired statements place it beyond all doubt that Christianity originated with the Supreme Governor of the universe, that its gracious provisions are the accomplishment of his counsel, and that its principles, however much they surpass the discoveries of reason, are in perfect harmony with the genuine dictates of natural religion. The substitution of the Redeemer in the room of sinners was the contrivance of the same wisdom.

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[*A second chasm in Mr. Hall's manuscript, supplied in substance from notes of others.*]

Secondly. Another indispensable circumstance in such a proceeding is, that it should be perfectly voluntary on the part of the sufferer. Otherwise, it would be an act of the highest injustice; it would be the addition of one offence to another, and give a greater shock to all rightly-disposed minds, than the acquittal of the guilty without any atonement. Whenever such an offering has been spoken of as taking place, it is represented as originating with the innocent person himself.

Here there appears, at first sight, an insuperable difficulty in the way of human salvation. How could that be rendered which was at once due to sin and mankind at large? Where could one be found that would endure the penalty freely, which was incurred by a sinful world? This our Saviour did. He came, not only by authority, but such was his infinite love, that he came voluntarily. He expressed the deepest interest in his undertaking. He announced the particulars of his suffering, how he must be delivered, spit upon, and put to death; and in his hour of suffering, nothing is plainer than that he gave himself up to it voluntarily, according to the settled purpose of his own mind.

No sacrifice should go unwillingly to the altar. It was, indeed, reckoned a bad omen when any one did so. None ever went so willingly as *he*. *He was led as a lamb to the slaughter*, and evinced a readiness to be offered up. *He endured the cross, despising the shame*, all for *the joy that was set before him;* that glorious reward, the eternal happiness of an innumerable multitude of intelligent creatures who must have perished if he had not been *stricken to death* for them.

Thirdly. It is farther necessary that the substitute not only undertake voluntarily, but that he be perfectly free from the offence which renders punishment necessary. If he were tainted with that for which the punishment was assigned; nay, if he were only in part implicated in any other crime, he had already incurred some penalty; and there must be a proportionate deduction for what was due on his part.

Accordingly, in the case of man, divine justice cannot be willing to acquiesce in a substitute who is a sharer in guilt; for the law has a previous hold upon him; there is a debt due on his own account.

But Jesus Christ, though a man, was, by reason of his miraculous

conception, free from the taint of original sin. *That holy thing* which was born of the virgin grew up in a course of perfect purity and rectitude. He could say to his enemies, *Which of you convinceth me of sin? He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.* He, and he alone, of all who are of our nature, appeared in this character. By this means he became an immaculate sacrifice. He was shadowed forth by a pure lamb. *He was as a lamb without spot.* It was not this that rendered the sacrifice sufficient, but in this respect it accomplished all that could be expected of a human sacrifice. His Father rested in him, not only because he was his beloved Son, a partaker of his divine nature, but because he was holy and *such an one as became us;* not that we had a claim to such a priest, but no other could answer for us. The Levitical high-priests could *never with those sacrifices which they offered continually, year by year, make the comers thereunto perfect; for each ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins;* and therefore he could only be an imperfect figure of the true high-priest, who offered not for himself, but offered himself for us.

Fourthly. There would be a great propriety in this also, that the innocent person substituted for the guilty should stand in some relation to him.

Now our Lord Jesus Christ was related to mankind; one like them whom he came to redeem. It was indispensable that he should stand in close connexion with them to whom his righteousness was to be transferred. This was shadowed forth in the law of a redeemer of a lost estate. The person who was to redeem must be related: hence a redeemer and a relation were expressed by one term, and the nearest relation was to redeem. This was not merely a law suited to that state of society, but was intended to foreshow the congruity of the substitution of Christ. *Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same.* Thus he became *like unto his brethren. He took not on him the nature of angels, but took on him the seed of Abraham*, the seed he came to redeem. As he came to sinful men, he took on him the *likeness of sinful flesh. He was made like unto us in all points, yet without sin.* The brazen serpent lifted up for the cure of the Israelites was of the same form as the serpents by which they were wounded. By one man came sin and death, by one man came redemption. *For if by one man's offence death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.* Much more is adduced to the same effect by St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, all tending to establish the truth, that as the first Adam was the cause of corruption, shame, and misery, so the second Adam is the source of holiness, life, and bliss.

Hence, then, the incarnation of our Lord was necessary. He was obliged to pass from one world to another, to take upon him a nature originally foreign from him. *I came forth from the Father*, saith he, *and am come into the world;* and justly will the love that prompted him to do so be the everlasting theme of all holy and happy beings

It is probable that if nothing else had rendered unsuitable the substitution of angels for men, this would have been sufficient, that, on account of the essential difference between their nature and that of man, there would have been an incongruity in substituting their acts for ours. But Jesus Christ, by his incarnation, being of one flesh and of one spirit with us, was fitted to sustain the character of Redeemer. He thus became indeed our kinsman, one in the same circumstances, under the same law, liable to the same temptations, subject to the same passions, encompassed about with our infirmities, but *sinless;* and thus suited every way to become a substitute for our guilty race.

[☞*We again return to the original copy.*]

Thus much is certain, that as the wisdom of God saw it requisite that the redemption of guilty man should be effected by a sacrifice proportioned to the exigence of the case, the assumption of human nature followed as a natural consequence. The ancient sacrifices appointed by Moses possessed not (it was impossible they should) any intrinsic validity; they exhibited not the expiation, but the remembrance of sin every year. This is the express declaration of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. *But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God.* By his assumption of human nature, he stood (notwithstanding that original superiority which removed him at an infinite distance) to the race of man in the relation of a brother; for the flesh which he condescended to take of the blessed virgin, of whom he was miraculously conceived, connected him with our common progenitor. *For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one,* derived from one parent; *for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren; saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.*

Fifthly. If the substitution of the innocent in the room of the guilty is at all permitted, it seems requisite that no advantage should be taken of a momentary enthusiasm, a sudden impulse of heroic feeling, which might prompt a generous mind to make a sacrifice, of which, on cool deliberation, he repented.

A proper space should be allowed for reviewing the resolution, for surveying it in all its consequences, and forming a settled and immovable purpose. The self-devotion implied in such a transaction will acquire additional dignity in proportion as it appears the result, not of hurried and impetuous feeling, but of fixed determination and extended foresight; a resolution on which time has had no other effect than to fortify and confirm it.

How often is the pang of intense commiseration found to suggest

the idea of sacrifices, which the calmer and more permanent dictates of self-interest consign to oblivion and scatter to the wind! Perhaps there are few who have not been the subject of momentary feeling, the steady predominance of which would have made them heroes and martyrs, who yet shortly subside into their native selfishness, and before the season for action arrives, the genial current which warmed them for a moment is chilled and frozen.

In the case we are now contemplating, the admission of an innocent person to suffer instead of the guilty, nothing could reconcile the mind to such a procedure but such a settled purpose on the part of the substitute as precludes the possibility of a vacillation or change. But this condition is found in the highest perfection on the part of the blessed Redeemer. His oblation of himself was not the execution of a sudden purpose, the fruit of a momentary movement of pity; it was the result of deliberate counsel, the accomplishment of an ancient purpose, formed in the remotest recesses of a past eternity. He was *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, when he set a compass upon the face of the deep; when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment; when he fixed the foundations of the earth: rejoicing in the habitable parts of his earth; his delights were with the sons of men.*

It is appointed indeed *for all men once to die.* With us it is an event inseparably attached to an abode on earth. But with the Redeemer it was not so properly an incident of his earthly existence, as its principal end and design. He assumed life for the purpose of laying it down; and all the purposes, great as they were, which were accomplished by his life, were in entire subordination to those which he contemplated as the certain consequences of his death. In the course of his sojourn here, he never permitted himself to lose sight of it for a moment. The final scene, with all its terrors, was familiar to his imagination, and endeared to his heart; from no indifference to suffering, real or affected, but from the prospect of *the joy that was set before him. I have a baptism to be baptised with*, he exclaimed, and *how am I straitened till it be accomplished!* Instead of wishing to efface the remembrance of it by turning his attention to other objects, there was nothing which he appeared more solicitous to inculcate on the minds of his disciples than the certainty of his future sufferings. *Then took he unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. Then shall he be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be spitefully entreated and spit upon, and they shall scourge him and put him to death.* When Peter, shocked at these annunciations, presumed to expostulate with his Divine Master, he met with the severest rebuke. *Get thee behind me, Satan*, said he, *for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.* Until he had finished the work which was given him, he con-

sulted his safety, often concealed himself, and avoided such an open display of his character and pretensions as might precipitate the designs of his enemies. But the moment the appointed time had arrived, we find him laying aside all reserve, courting the publicity which before he had shunned, and fearlessly, in the face of the sanhedrim, and even before the tribunal of Pilate, avowing himself *the Son of God*, though he well knew the effect would be to hasten his exit. While danger was at a distance he was cautious and reserved, but the moment it arrived he abandoned himself to it with a calm and fearless intrepidity.

Sixthly. In the case of the substitution of the innocent for the guilty, it seems highly requisite that he who offers himself as the substitute should justify the law by which he suffers. To say the least, the decorum of the transaction will be much heightened on the supposition, that he who sustains vicarious punishment, not only yields his entire consent, but proclaims, at the same time, his conviction of the equity and goodness of the legal enactment to which he falls a sacrifice. It were to be desired, though it can scarcely be hoped, that penal laws were so constructed as to impress a persuasion of their justice universally on those who have incurred their penalties. But in the case we are now considering, which is that of an innocent person substituting himself in the place of the guilty, there is a peculiar reason for demanding his express approval of the equity of the original sentence. The enthusiastic admiration which such conduct would naturally excite, the reverence which such a display of unparalleled magnanimity would necessarily attach to its possessor, could not fail to add dignity to his character and weight to his sentiments; and if, while he submitted to the penalty, he reprobated the severity of the law, the feelings of the spectators might be divided between esteem for the illustrious sufferer, and an aversion to the supposed rigour of the law. Thus the character of the sufferer would operate in a contrary direction to the punishment, and tend to defeat its salutary effects.

In the substitution of the Redeemer of mankind were conjoined the most prompt and voluntary endurance of the penalty, with the most avowed and cordial approbation of the justice of its sanctions. It was a great part of the business of his life to assert and vindicate by his doctrine that law which he *magnified* and made illustrious by his passion.

Previous to his offering himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world, he was incessantly employed in rescuing the precepts of God from the false glosses by which they had been corrupted, in asserting their spirituality, exhibiting their extent, and sustaining their just authority, as the unalterable rule of action and standard of duty.

Never had the law such an expounder as in the person of Him who came into the world to exhaust its penalties and endure its curse. He condemned, with the greatest severity, every tenet or practice that went to weaken its obligations or relax its strictness. To place it on the throne, to magnify and make it honourable, was not less the object of his ministry and of his life, than of his death. Thus, the

sentiments of supreme devotion and attachment, to which he is entitled as the Saviour of the world, combine to strengthen our veneration for the law; nor can we pretend to any portion of the *mind of Christ*, but just in proportion to our practical regard to the law of God, as *holy, just, and good*. The more intimately our affections are united to Christ, the more, to speak in Scripture language, *he dwells in our hearts by faith*, the more will the beauty of holiness attract the heart, and the deformity of sin be the object of our aversion. As the love of Christ is the master-principle in the Christian system, so its operation must invariably coincide with the claims of divine authority; because it is the love of a personage who was distinguished from all others by a constant compliance with its dictates, and a most ardent devotion to its honour. *Think not that I am come to subvert the law or the prophets: I am come not to subvert, but to ratify. For, verily I say unto you, heaven and earth shall sooner perish than one iota or one tittle of the law shall perish without attaining its end.** In such terms as these did our Saviour assert the intrinsic excellence and unalterable perpetuity of the law of God; by which he has instructed us in the true nature of his sacrifice, which was designed, not merely to appease wrath, but to satisfy justice; not merely to relieve misery, but to expiate guilt. It is of the utmost importance that it should be indelibly engraved on our minds, that Christ died, not merely to rescue us from the ruin which we had incurred, but from the punishment which we had merited; since our gratitude for the provisions of mercy will be exactly proportioned to the conviction we feel of the perfect equity of that sentence from which it exempts us. In this view we are unspeakably indebted to our great Deliverer for so zealously asserting the honours of that law which cost him so dear.

The penitent believer is now under no temptation to indulge depreciating thoughts of the immutable excellence and obligation of that rule of duty which he has so frequently and awfully violated.

Seventhly. That the voluntary substitution of an innocent person in the stead of the guilty, may be capable of answering the ends of justice, nothing seems more necessary than that the substitute should be of equal consideration, at least, to the party in whose behalf he interposes. The interests sacrificed by the suffering party should not be of less cost and value than those which are secured by such a procedure.

But the aggregate value of those interests must be supposed to be in some proportion to the rank and dignity of the party to which they belong. As a sacrifice to justice, the life of a peasant must, on this principle, be deemed a most inadequate substitute for that of a personage of the highest order. We should consider the requisitions of justice eluded, rather than satisfied, by such a commutation. It is on this ground that St. Paul declares it to be *impossible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins;* the intrinsic meanness of the brute creation being such, that a victim taken from thence could be of

* Matt. v 18. Dr. Campbell's version.

no consideration in the eyes of offended justice. They were qualified to exhibit, as he reminds us, *a remembrance of sin every year*, but are utterly unequal to the expiation of its guilt.

In this view, the redemption of the human race seemed to be hopeless; and their escape from merited destruction, on any principles connected with law and justice, absolutely impossible. For where could an adequate substitute be found? Where, among the descendants of Adam, partakers of flesh and blood, could *one* be selected of such pre-eminent dignity and worth, that *his* oblation of himself should be deemed a fit and proper equivalent to the whole race of man? to say nothing of the impossibility of finding there a spotless victim (and no other could be accepted). Who is there that ever possessed that prodigious superiority in all the qualities which aggrandize their possessor to every other member of the human family, which shall entitle him to be the representative, either in action or in suffering, of the whole human race? In order to be capable of becoming a victim, he must be invested with a frail and mortal nature; but the possession of such a nature reduces him to that equality with his brethren, that joint participation of meanness and infirmity, which totally disqualifies him for becoming a substitute. Here a dilemma presents itself from which there seems no possibility of escape. If man is left to encounter the judicial effects of his sentence, his ruin is sealed and certain. If he is to be redeemed by a substitute, that substitute must possess contradictory attributes, a combination of qualities not to be found within the compass of human nature. He must be frail and mortal, or he cannot die a sacrifice; he must possess ineffable dignity, or he cannot merit as a substitute.

Such were the apparently insurmountable difficulties which obstructed the salvation of man by any methods worthy of the divine character; such the darkness and perplexity which involved his prospects, that it is more than probable the highest created intelligence would not have been equal to the solution of the question, *How shall man be just with God?*

The *mystery hid from ages and generations*, the mystery of *Christ crucified* dispels the obscurity, and presents in the person of the Redeemer all the qualifications which human conception can imbody as contributing to the perfect character of a substitute. By his participation of flesh and blood he becomes susceptible of suffering, and possesses within himself the materials of a sacrifice. By its personal union with the eternal word, the sufferings sustained in a nature thus assumed acquired an infinite value, so as to be justly deemed more than equivalent to the penalty originally denounced.

His assumption of the human nature made his oblation of himself *possible;* his possession of the divine rendered it efficient; and thus weakness and power, the imperfections incident to a frail and mortal creature, and the exemption from these, the attributes of time and those of eternity, the elements of being the most opposite, and deduced from opposite worlds, equally combined to give efficacy to his character as the Redeemer, and validity to his sacrifice. They constitute a person

who has no counterpart in heaven or on earth, who may be most justly denominated "*Wonderful;*" composed of parts and features of which (however they may subsist elsewhere in a state of separation,) the combination and union nothing short of infinite wisdom could have conceived, or infinite power effected. The mysterious constitution of the person of Christ, the stupendous link which unites God and man, and heaven and earth; that mystic ladder, on which *the angels of God ascended and descended*, whose foot is on a level with the dust, and whose summit penetrates the inmost recesses of an unapproachable splendour, will be, we have reason to believe, through eternity, the object of profound contemplation and adoring wonder.

In ascribing the sufficiency and efficacy of the atonement made by our Saviour to the pre-eminent dignity of his person as the Son of God, we are justified by the direct testimony of Scripture, which is wont to unite these together in such juxtaposition as plainly implies their intimate and inseparable relation to each other.

We have already seen that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews founds the insufficiency of the victims under the law to take away sin on their inherent meanness, with which he contrasts the validity of the atonement made by Christ: a mode of reasoning, the force of which entirely depends on his superior dignity and worth. After asserting that the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin, he adds, *Then said I, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. Above, when he said, Sacrifice, and offering, and burnt-offerings for sin thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure therein which are offered by the law; then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first that he may establish the second.* Adverting to the acknowledged fact that the blood of bulls and of goats availed to the purifying of the flesh, in other words, to the removal of ceremonial pollutions, he adds, *How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living and true God?*

All must acknowledge that the purification of the conscience from dead works, that is, the pardon of sin and peace with God, is an infinitely greater benefit than the removal of legal disabilities under the ceremonial law; but the apostle teaches us to expect from the sacrifice of Christ this incomparably greater benefit with a much firmer assurance than that with which the pious Jew anticipated the less. *The blood of Jesus Christ his Son*, St. John assures us, *cleanseth us from all sin.* If St. Peter has occasion to enforce the obligation of shunning the pollutions of the world, the argument he makes use of for that purpose is derived from the value of that blood which was shed for their redemption, in comparison to which all the treasures of earth are consigned to contempt. *Forasmuch as ye know*, is his language, *ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*

As the whole provision of a Saviour originated in the gracious purpose of God, it is with the utmost propriety that he is denominated his *gift;* the transcendent greatness of which is frequently brought forward as a demonstration of the ineffable extent of his love. *God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* But since he was given to be a propitiatory sacrifice, the same intrinsic dignity and excellence which heightened the value of the gift must have contributed in an equal degree to ensure the validity and sufficiency of the sacrifice.

Though many have presumed to call in question and even to deny the divinity of our Saviour, I am not aware that there are any who embrace that fundamental doctrine who hesitate for a moment respecting the intrinsic validity of his sacrifice, or who entertain a doubt of the sufficiency of such a provision to satisfy the claims of justice and vindicate the honours of a broken law. There is something so stupendous in the voluntary humiliation and death of Him who claims to be *the only-begotten of the Father, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person,* that to convince us of the fact the most powerful and unequivocal testimony is indispensably necessary; but to be convinced of the validity and sufficiency of such a sin-offering for all the purposes for which an offering can be made, to perceive it to be the most ample vindication of the moral attributes of God, in consistence with the pardon of sin and the salvation of sinners, no effort is necessary whatever: such a persuasion insinuates itself with the greatest ease, and takes the firmest possession of the mind. *He that spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

It is observable that the ineffable grace of God in the *communication* of spiritual blessings is not more celebrated by the inspired penmen than the stupendous method in which they are imparted. That eternal life should be bestowed on sinful men is the subject of their devout admiration; but that it should be bestowed at such a cost is still more so. They appear to conceive it impossible for such an apparatus to terminate in a less glorious result.

A cold and skeptical philosophy may, I am aware, suggest specious cavils against the doctrines of revelation on this subject; cavils which derive all their force, not from the superior wisdom of their authors, but solely from the inadequacy of human reason to the full comprehension of heavenly mysteries. But still there is a simple grandeur in the fact, that God has *set forth his Son to be a propitiation,* sufficient to silence the impotent clamours of sophistry, and to carry to all serious and humble men a firm conviction that the law is exalted, and the justice of God illustriously vindicated and asserted by such an expedient. To minds of that description, the immaculate purity of the divine character, its abhorrence of sin, and its inflexible adherence to

moral order will present themselves in the cross in a more impressive light than in any other object.

Eighthly. However much we might be convinced of the competence of vicarious suffering to accomplish the ends of justice, and whatever the benefits we may derive from it, a benevolent mind could never be reconciled to the sight of virtue of the highest order finally oppressed and consumed by its own energies; and the more intense the admiration excited the more eager would be the desire of some compensatory arrangement, some expedient by which an ample retribution might be assigned to such heroic sacrifices. If the suffering of the substitute involved his destruction, what satisfaction could a generous and feeling mind derive from impunity procured at such a cost? When David, in an agony of thirst, longed for the waters of Bethlehem, which some of his servants immediately procured for him with the extreme hazard of their lives, the monarch refused to taste it, exclaiming, *It is the price of blood!* but *poured it out before the Lord.* The felicity which flows from the irreparable misery of another, and more especially of one whose disinterested benevolence alone exposed him to it, will be faintly relished by him who is not immersed in selfishness. If there be any portions of history whose perusal affords more pure and exquisite delight than others, they are those which present the spectacle of a conflicting and self-devoted virtue, after innumerable toils and dangers undergone in the cause, enjoying a dignified repose in the bosom of the country which its example has ennobled and its valour saved. Such a spectacle gratifies the best propensities, satisfies the highest demands of our moral and social nature. It affords a delightful glimpse of the future and perfect economy of retributive justice.

In the plan of human redemption this requisition is fully satisfied. While we accompany the Saviour through the successive stages of his mortal sojourning, marked by a corresponding succession of trials, each of which was more severe than the former, till the scene darkened, and the clouds of wrath from Heaven and from earth pregnant with materials which none but a divine hand could have collected, discharged themselves on him in a deluge of agony and of blood under which he expired; we perceive at once the sufficiency, I had almost said the redundancy, of the atonement.

But surely deliverance even *from the wrath to come* would afford an imperfect enjoyment if it were imbittered with the recollection that we were indebted for it to the irreparable destruction of our compassionate Redeemer. The consolation arising from *reconciliation with God* is subject to no such deduction. While we rejoice in the cross of Christ as the source of pardon, our satisfaction is heightened by beholding it succeeded by the crown; by seeing him that was *for a little while made lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, seated at the right-hand of God, thence expecting till his enemies are made his footstool.*

Thus, whether we contemplate the economy of redemption as a divine expedient for reconciling the moral attributes of Deity with man's salvation, or, in its final result to the Saviour himself, it is

replete with moral congruity, and satisfies every demand of the understanding and of the heart.

Ninthly. If the principle of substitution be at all admitted in the operations of criminal law, it is too obvious to require proof that it should be introduced very sparingly, only on very rare occasions, and never be allowed to subside into a settled course. So many circumstances, we have already seen, must concur to render it fit, that the attempt to make it a matter of frequent and ordinary occurrence would be preposterous to the utmost degree. It requires some great crisis to justify its introduction, some extraordinary combination of difficulties obstructing the natural course of justice; it requires, that while the letter of the law is dispensed with, its spirit be fully adhered to: so that instead of tending to weaken the motives to obedience, it shall present a salutary monition, a moral and edifying spectacle.

Considerations such as these are more than enough to show that such a method of procedure must be of rare occurrence; and that to this circumstance, whenever it does occur, its utility must in a great measure be ascribed.

The substitution of Christ in the room of a guilty race receives all the advantage as an impressive spectacle which it is possible to derive from this circumstance. *He once suffered from the beginning of the world;* nor have we the least reason to suppose any similar transaction has occurred on the theatre of the universe, or will ever occur again in the annals of eternity. *It stands amid the lapse of ages, and the waste of worlds, a single and solitary monument.*

From numerous intimations in sacred writ, we are compelled to believe that in the comprehension of its design, and the extent of its consequences, affecting every order of being, it leaves no room for a counterpart or parallel; that it is, so to speak, the master-piece of infinite goodness and wisdom, intended to exhibit the riches of divine grace as an object for the eternal contemplation of the highest intelligences. *To the intent, that now unto principalities and powers, in heavenly places,* is the language of Paul, *might be made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.*

Though the mystery of the cross may be considered as primarily terminating itself on the restoration of the human race to order and happiness, we cannot doubt for a moment of its extending its reflected lustre much farther, of its forming a new epoch in the moral administration of the Deity, and giving birth to a new order of things in the heavenly world.

Nothing is more certain than that Christianity is a system which is at present but partially developed, in condescension probably to our very limited faculties, which are incapable of comprehending it in its full extent.

Be this as it may, the dignity of our Lord's person, the design of his sacrifice, together with the avowed purpose of the Father to *gather together in him all things that are in heaven or in earth,* conspire to place it beyond all doubt that the *substitution* of Christ is a *unique* event. With the praises due to *Him that loved us, and washed us from*

our sins in his own blood, none will have merit to share; nor will the emotions of gratitude, which his matchless achievements inspire, ever be dissipated and impaired by being distributed among many objects. The name of Jesus will remain eternally distinguished from every other, as the name to which *every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, or things on earth.*

Tenthly. Once more, whenever the expedient of vicarious suffering is adopted, a publication of the design of that transaction becomes as indispensably necessary as of the transaction itself; since none of the effects which it is intended to produce can be realized but in proportion as that is understood. Viewed in itself, and considered apart from this, it would seem the height of injustice, and in the room of improving would give a violent shock to our moral sentiments. Punishment inflicted on the offending party speaks for itself, and when ordained by law impresses the spectator with an instantaneous conviction of its justice and propriety.

With vicarious punishment it is just the reverse. It is a spectacle so far removed from the usual course of events, that nothing can reconcile the mind to it but a clear exposure of its origin and design, and the peculiar circumstances of the crisis which determined its adoption.

Hence we see the infinite importance of the doctrine of the cross, that not merely the fact of our Lord's death and sufferings should be announced, but that their object and purpose, as a great moral expedient, should be published to all nations. In vain would the apostles have proclaimed every where the fact, that Jesus of Nazareth, a person of spotless innocence, *was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and rose again the third day*, had they suppressed the mysterious design, the moral aspect of those stupendous transactions.

Apart from this, it would only have added one more to the humiliating examples of the purest virtue oppressed with calumny, and doomed to a violent, painful, and ignominious death. It might have called forth the tears of sensibility, and there it would have ended, without exerting the slightest influence on the prospects, or changing the destiny of men. But the cross of Christ was not exhibited as a tragic spectacle, adapted to move the commiseration of mankind, and excite their horror at the perfidy, cruelty, and ingratitude which were the human precursors of the means of producing that catastrophe: such emotion it has already occasioned, and will to the end of time; but all this in perfect subordination to a higher order of sentiments arising from the contemplation of his sufferings as the price of our redemption. The matchless expedient which the wisdom of God, prompted by infinite compassion, devised for *reconciling the world unto himself*, the facts which compose the records of the New Testament, the miracles which illustrated the life of our Saviour, and the prodigies which attended his death, important as they are, viewed as the seals attesting his mission, are only subsidiary; the whole of these, together with the mission itself, owe their importance chiefly to his sacrifice.

In the preceding ages, many intimations were afforded of this mys

tery. Sin had scarcely made its entrance into the world, before the guilty pair were comforted by the promise of *a seed of the woman that should bruise the serpent's head.* The institution of vicarious sacrifices immediately succeeded, we have every reason to believe, by Divine appointment. The rejection of Cain's offering, and the acceptance of Abel's, demonstrated the necessity of the shedding of blood. A system of figurative rites and ceremonies, intended as silent predictions of the future, in which bloody sacrifices occupied the chief place, were ordained by Moses as *shadows of good things to come.* The succeeding prophets, in long succession, proclaimed the advent, and depicted the character and sufferings of *him that was to come;* some with more particularity and perspicuity than others, but each with some trait or colour peculiar to himself; till at length, *in the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons.*

The doctrine of remission of sins through the blood of that victim which was once offered for the sins of the world, forms the grand peculiarity of the gospel, and was the principal theme of the apostolic ministry, and is still pre-eminently *the power of God to salvation.* It is inculcated throughout the New Testament in every possible form, it meets us at every turn, and is, in short, the sun and centre of the whole system.

Here, then, we are permitted to explore and contemplate that mysterious wisdom of God which was hidden in the secret of his counsels from preceding ages and generations, *but is now made manifest by the preaching of the holy prophets and apostles.* Here we behold the Deity in Christ Jesus *reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing to them their trespasses.* Here we discern the harmony of the divine attributes, as they are exerted and displayed in the astonishing work of man's salvation, the glory of God *shining in the face of Jesus Christ,* by which saints are changed into the *same image from glory to glory.* The cordial reception, the inwrought persuasion of this doctrine, cannot fail to purify the heart and renovate the character. The deepest conviction of the evil of sin and the helplessness of the sinner is necessarily involved in the belief of this all-comprehensive truth. For what estimate of the malignity and turpitude of sin must He have formed who does nothing in vain, who saw that nothing would suffice for its expiation short of the precious blood of his only-begotten Son? And how fatal the impotence which required to be extricated from its miseries, to be relieved from its burden at such a cost? To create man nothing was required but a word, *He spake, and it was done.* But to recover him from the ruin in which sin had involved him, it was necessary for the Eternal Son to become incarnate, and *the Lord of life* to expire upon a cross. This is the mirror which reflects the true features and lineaments of moral evil, and displays more of its demerit than the most profound contemplation of the law, of the purity of its precepts, or the terror of its sanctions, could have conveyed to any finite mind. In pouring its vials on the head of that innocent and

adorable victim, it evinced its inflexible severity, its awful majesty, to an extent and in a form never conceived before; and we may well suppose that superior intelligences turn from the contemplation of such a spectacle with a new impression of the great Supreme, as *a just God, and yet a Saviour.*

He who derives from this doctrine the smallest encouragement to sin has never either felt or understood it as he ought. He has never surveyed it in its most interesting aspect, in its relation to the character of God, the demands of his law, and the immutable rights of his moral administration. He has never, to speak in the language of Scripture, *seen the Son* in such a manner as to *believe on him;* and, however he may be persuaded of the death of Christ as *a fact*, he is a total stranger to the doctrine of *Christ crucified.*

If the substitution of the Redeemer in the stead of a guilty race is admitted, it is easy to perceive that it is the only foundation of human hope; and that the attempt to combine it with any thing else as the material of justification must necessarily be abortive. Nothing else can possibly stand in the same order. The merit of the Saviour, arising from his matchless condescension and love, in becoming *obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*, is of so elevated and transcendent a kind, as to disclaim all association with the imperfections of human virtue as the basis of justification. The price of redemption (to use a scriptural metaphor) has been paid; the justice of God is satisfied; a full and complete atonement has been made. Nothing remains on the part of the penitent sinner but to receive the reconciliation, and with the emotions of humble gratitude to open his heart to that inspiration of love which naturally results from the reception of so great a benefit.

The habitual contemplation of the cross of Christ will be found the most effectual expedient for weakening the power of corruption, resisting the seductions of the world, and rising progressively into the image of God and the Redeemer.

It will at the same time lay the deepest foundation for humility. He who ascribes his salvation to this source will be exempted from every temptation to exalt himself; and while he rejoices in the ample provision made for the pardon of his sins and the relief of his miseries, he will join with the utmost ardour in the song of the redeemed,—*To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.* Amen.

ON

TERMS OF COMMUNION;

WITH A

PARTICULAR VIEW TO THE CASE

OF

THE BAPTISTS AND PEDOBAPTISTS.

[PUBLISHED IN 1815.]

"What charter hath Christ given the church to bind men up to, more than himself hath done? or to exclude those from her society who may be admitted into heaven? Will Christ ever thank men at the great day for keeping such out from communion with his church, whom he will vouchsafe not only crowns of glory to, but it may be *aureolæ* too, if there be any such things there? The grave commission the apostles were sent out with was only *to teach what Christ had commanded them*. Not the least intimation of any power given them to impose or require any thing beyond what himself had spoken to them, or they were directed to by the immediate guidance of the Spirit of God."

STILLINGFLEET: IRENICUM

PREFACE.

The love of controversy was in no degree the motive for writing the following sheets. Controversy the writer considers as an evil, though often a necessary one. It is to be deprecated when it is directed to minute or frivolous objects, or when it is managed in such a manner as to call forth malevolent passions. He hopes the ensuing treatise will be found free from both these objections, and that, as the subject must be allowed to be of some importance, so the spirit in which it is handled is not chargeable with any material departure from the Christian temper. If the author has expressed himself on some occasions with considerable confidence, he trusts the reader will impute it, not to a forgetfulness of his personal deficiencies, but to the cause he has undertaken to support. The divided state of the Christian world has long been the subject of painful reflection; and if his feeble efforts might be the means 'of uniting a small portion only of it in closer ties, he will feel himself amply rewarded.

The practice of incorporating private opinions and human inventions with the constitution of a church, and with the terms of communion, has long appeared to him untenable in its principle, and pernicious in its effects. There is no position in the whole compass of theology of the truth of which he feels a stronger persuasion than that no man, or set of men are entitled to prescribe, as an indispensable condition of communion, what the New Testament has not enjoined as a condition of salvation. To establish this position is the principal object of the following work; and though it is more immediately occupied in the discussion of a case which respects the Baptists and Pedobaptists, that case is attempted to be decided entirely upon the principle now mentioned, and is no more than the application of it to a particular instance.

The writer is persuaded that a departure from this principle in the denomination to which he belongs has been extremely injurious, not only to the credit and prosperity of that particular body (which is a very subordinate consideration), but to the general interests of truth; and that but for the obstruction arising from that quarter, the views they entertain of one of the sacraments would have obtained a more extensive prevalence. By keeping themselves in a state of separation and seclusion from other Christians, they have not only evinced an inattention to some of the most important injunctions of Scripture, but have raised up an invincible barrier to the propagation of their sentiments beyond the precincts of their own party.

It has been insinuated that the author has taken an unfair advantage of his opponents, by choosing to bring forward this disquisition just at the moment when we have to lament the loss of a person whose judgment would have disposed, and his abilities enabled him to do ample justice to the opposite side of the question. He can assure his readers that none entertained a higher veneration for Mr. Fuller than himself, notwithstanding their difference of sentiment on this subject; and that when he entered on this discussion, it was with the fullest expectation of having his opposition to encounter. At that time his state of health, though not good, was such as suggested a hope that the event was very distant which we all deplore. Having been led to mention this affecting circumstance, I cannot refrain from expressing in a few words the sentiments of affectionate veneration with which I also regarded that excellent person while living, and cherish his memory now that he is no more; a man whose sagacity enabled him to penetrate to the depths of every subject he explored, whose conceptions were so powerful and luminous that what was recondite and original appeared familiar; what was intricate, easy and perspicuous in his hands; equally successful in enforcing the practical, in stating the theoretical, and discussing the polemical branches of theology; without the advantage of early education, he rose to high distinction among the religious writers of his day, and in the midst of a most active and laborious life, left monuments of his piety and genius which will survive to distant posterity Were I making his eulogium I should necessarily dwell on the spotless integrity of his private life, his fidelity and friendship, his neglect of self-interest, his ardent attachment to truth, and especially the series of unceasing labours and exertions in superintending the mission to India, to which he most probably fell a victim. He had nothing feeble or undecisive in his character, but to every undertaking in which he engaged he brought all the powers of his understanding, all the energies of his heart; and if he were less distinguished by the comprehension than the acumen and solidity of his thoughts; less eminent for the gentler graces than for stern integrity and native grandeur of mind, we have only to remember the necessary limitations of human excellence. While he endeared himself to his denomination by a long course of most useful labour; by his excellent works on the Socinian and Deistical controversies, as well as his devotion to the cause of missions, he laid the world under lasting obligations. Though he was known to profess different views from the writer on the subject under present discussion, it may be inferred from a *decisive fact*, which it is not necessary to record, that his attachment to them was not very strong, nor his conviction probably very powerful. Be this as it may, his sanction of the practice of exclusive communion has no doubt contributed in no small degree to recommend it to the denomination of which he was so distinguished an ornament. They who are the first to disclaim human authority in the affairs of religion, are not always least susceptible of its influence.

It is observable, also, that bodies of men are very slow in changing their opinions, which, with some inconveniences, is productive of this

advantage, that truth undergoes a severer investigation, and her conquests are the more permanent for being gradually acquired. On this account the writer is not so sanguine as to expect his performance will occasion any sudden revolution in the sentiments and practice of the class of Christians more immediately concerned; if, along with other causes, it ultimately contribute to so desirable an issue, he will be satisfied.

It may not be improper to assign the reason for not noticing the treatise of the celebrated Mr. Robinson, of Cambridge, on the same subject. It is not because he is insensible to the ingenuity and beauty of that performance, as well as of the other works of that original and extraordinary writer; but because it rests on principles more lax and latitudinarian than it is in his power conscientiously to adopt; Mr. R. not having adverted, as far as he perceives, to the distinction of fundamentals, but constructed his plea for toleration* in such a manner as to comprehend all the varieties of religious belief.

The only author I have professed to answer is the late venerable Booth, his treatise being generally considered by our opponents as the ablest defence of their hypothesis.

I have only to add, that I commit the following treatise to the candour of the public, and the blessing of God, hoping that, as it is designed not to excite but to allay animosities, not to widen but to heal the breaches among Christians, it will meet with the indulgence due to good intentions, however feebly executed.

* The intelligent reader will understand me to refer, not to civil toleration by the state, but to that which is exercised by religious societies.

ON TERMS OF COMMUNION.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

Whoever forms his ideas of the Church of Christ from an attentive perusal of the New Testament will perceive that *unity* is one of its essential characteristics; and that, though it be branched out into many distinct societies, it is still but one. "The Church," says Cyprian, "is one which by reason of its fecundity is extended into a multitude, in the same manner as the rays of the sun, however numerous, constitute but one light; and the branches of a tree, however many, are attached to one trunk, which is supported by its tenacious root; and when various rivers flow from the same fountain, though number is diffused by the redundant supply of waters, unity is preserved in their origin." Nothing more abhorrent from the principles and maxims of the sacred oracles can be conceived, than the idea of a plurality of true churches, neither in actual communion with each other, nor in a capacity for such communion. Though this rending of the seamless garment of our Saviour, this schism in the members of his mystical body, is by far the greatest calamity which has befallen the Christian interest, and one of the most fatal effects of the great apostacy foretold by the sacred penmen, we have been so long familiarized to it as to be scarcely sensible of its enormity; nor does it excite surprise or concern in any degree proportioned to what would be felt by one who had contemplated the church in the first ages. Christian societies regarding each other with the jealousies of rival empires, each aiming to raise itself on the ruin of all others, making extravagant boasts of superior purity, generally in exact proportion to their departures from it, and scarcely deigning to acknowledge the possibility of obtaining salvation out of their pale, is the odious and disgusting spectacle which modern Christianity presents. The bond of charity, which unites the genuine followers of Christ in distinction from the world, is dissolved, and the very terms by which it was wont to be denoted, exclusively employed to express a predilection for a sect. The evils which result from this state of division are incalculable: it supplies infidels with their most plausible topics of invective; it hardens the consciences of the irreligious, weakens the hands of the good, impedes the efficacy of prayer, and is probably the principal obstruction to that ample effusion of the Spirit which is essential to the renovation of the world.

It is easier, however, it is confessed, to deplore the malady than to prescribe the cure: for however important the preservation of harmony and peace, the interests of truth and holiness are still more so; nor must we forget the order in which the graces of the Spirit are arranged

"The wisdom which is from above is first *pure*, then *peaceable*." Peace should be anxiously sought, but always in subordination to purity, and therefore every attempt to reconcile the differences among Christians which involves the sacrifice of truth, or the least deliberate deviation from the revealed will of Christ, is spurious in its origin, and dangerous in its tendency. If communion with a Christian society cannot be had without a compliance with rites and usages which we deem idolatrous or superstitious, or without a surrender of that liberty in which we are commanded to stand fast, we must, as we value our allegiance, forego, however reluctantly, the advantages of such a union. Wherever purity and simplicity of worship are violated by the heterogeneous mixture of human inventions, we are not at liberty to comply with them for the sake of peace, because the first consideration in every act of worship is its correspondence with the revealed will of God, which will often justify us in declining the *external* communion of a church with which we cease not to cultivate a communion in spirit. It is one thing to decline a connexion with the members of a community *absolutely*, or simply because they belong to such a community, and another to join with them in practices which we deem superstitious and erroneous. In the latter instance, we cannot be said absolutely to refuse a connexion with the pious part of such societies; we decline it merely because it is clogged with conditions which render it impracticable. It is impossible for a Protestant dissenter, for example, without manifest inconsistency, to become a member of the established church; but to admit the members of that community to participate at the Lord's table, without demanding a formal renunciation of their peculiar sentiments, includes nothing contradictory or repugnant. The cases are totally distinct, and the reasons which would apply forcibly against the former would be irrelevant to the latter. In the first supposition, the dissenter, by an active concurrence in what he professes to disapprove, ceases to dissent; in the last no principle is violated, no practice is altered, no innovation is introduced.

Hence arises a question, how far we are justified in repelling from our communion those from whom we differ on matters confessedly not essential to salvation, when that communion is accompanied with no innovation in the rites of worship, merely on account of a diversity of sentiment on other subjects. In other words, are we at liberty, or are we not, to walk with our Christian brethren, *as far as we are agreed*, or must we renounce their fellowship on account of error allowed not to be fundamental, although nothing is proposed to be done, or omitted, in such acts of communion, which would not equally be done, or omitted, on the supposition of their absence. Such is the precise state of the question which it is my intention to discuss in these pages; and it may possibly contribute to its elucidation to observe, that the true idea of Christian communion is by no means confined to a joint participation of the Lord's Supper. He who in the words of the apostles' creed expresses his belief in the *communion of saints*, adverts to much more than is comprehended in one particular act. In an intelligent assent to that article is comprehended the total of that sympathy and affection, with all its natural expressions and effects, by which the followers of

Christ are united, in consequence of their union with their Head, and their joint share in the common salvation. The kiss of charity in the apostolic age, the right hand of fellowship, a share in the oblations of the church, a commendatory epistle attesting the exemplary character of the bearer, uniting in social prayer, the employment of the term brother or sister to denote spiritual consanguinity, were all considered in the purest ages as tokens of *communion;* a term which is never applied in the New Testament exclusively to the Lord's Supper. When it is used in connexion with that rite, it is employed, not to denote the fellowship of Christians, but the spiritual participation of the body and blood of Christ.*

When we engage a Christian brother to present supplications to God in our behalf it cannot be doubted that we have fellowship with him, not less real or spiritual than at the Lord's table. From these considerations it is natural to infer, that no scruple ought to be entertained respecting the lawfulness of uniting to commemorate our Saviour's death with those with whom we feel ourselves at liberty to join in every other branch of religious worship. Where no attempt is made to obscure its import, or impair its simplicity, by the introduction of human ceremonies, but it is proposed to be celebrated in the manner which we apprehend to be perfectly consonant to the mind of Christ, it would seem less reasonable to refuse to co-operate in this branch of religion than in any other, because it is appointed to be a memorial of the greatest instance of love that was ever exhibited, as well as the principal pledge of Christian fraternity. It must appear surprising that the rite which of all others is most adapted to cement mutual attachment, and which is in a great measure appointed for that purpose, should be fixed upon as the line of demarkation, the impassable barrier, to separate and disjoin the followers of Christ. He who admits his fellow-christians to share in every other spiritual privilege, while he prohibits his approach to the Lord's table, entertains a view of that institution diametrically opposite to what has usually prevailed; he must consider it not so much in the light of a commemoration of his Saviour's death and passion, as a religious test, designed to ascertain and establish an agreement in points not fundamental. According to this notion of it, it is no longer a symbol of our common Christianity, it is the badge and criterion of a party, a mark of discrimination applied to distinguish the nicer shades of difference among Christians. How far either Scripture or reason can be adduced in support of such a view of the subject, it will be the business of the following pages to inquire.

In the mean while it will be necessary, in order to render the argument perfectly intelligible, to premise a few words respecting the particular controversy on which the ensuing observations are meant especially to bear. Few of my readers probably require to be informed, that there is a class of Christians pretty widely diffused through these realms, who deny the validity of infant baptism, considering it as a human invention, not countenanced by the Scriptures, nor by the practice of the first and purest ages. Besides their denial of the right of infants to baptism they also contend for the exclusive validity of im-

* 1 Cor. x. 16.

mersion in that ordinance, in distinction from the sprinkling or pouring of water. In support of the former, they allege the total silence of Scripture respecting the baptism of infants, together with their incompetency to comprehend the truths, or sustain the engagements, which they conceive it designed to exhibit. For the latter, they urge the well-known import of the original word employed to express the baptismal rite, which they allege cannot, without the most unnatural violence, be understood to command any thing less than an *immersion* of the whole body. The class of Christians whose sentiments I am relating, are usually known by the appellation of *Baptists;* in contradistinction from whom all other Christians may properly be denominated *Pedobaptists.* It is not my intention to enter into a defence of their peculiar tenets, though they have my unqualified approbation; but merely to state them for the information of my readers. It must be obvious that in the judgment of the Baptists, such as have only received the baptismal rite in their infancy must be deemed in reality *unbaptized;* for this is only a different mode of expressing their conviction of the invalidity of infant sprinkling. On this ground they have for the most part confined their communion to persons of their own persuasion, in which, illiberal as it may appear, they are supported by the general practice of the Christian world, which, whatever diversities of opinion may have prevailed, has generally concurred in insisting upon baptism as an indispensable prerequisite to the Lord's table. The effect which has resulted in this particular case has indeed been singular, but it has arisen from a rigid adherence to a principle, almost universally adopted, that baptism is under all circumstances, a necessary prerequisite to the Lord's Supper The practice we are now specifying has usually been termed *strict communion*, while the opposite practice of admitting sincere Christians to the Eucharist, though in our judgment not baptized, is styled *free communion.* Strict communion is the general practice of our churches, though the abetters of the opposite opinion are rapidly increasing both in numbers and in respectability. The humble hope of casting some additional light on a subject which appears to me of no trivial importance is my only motive for composing this treatise, in which it will be necessary to attempt the establishment of principles sufficiently comprehensive to decide other questions in ecclesiastical polity, besides those which concern the present controversy. I am greatly mistaken if it be possible to bring it to a satisfactory issue, without adverting to topics in which the Christian world are not less interested than the Baptists. If the conclusions we shall endeavour to establish, appear on impartial inquiry to be well founded, it will follow that serious errors respecting terms of communion have prevailed to a wide extent in the Christian church. It will be my anxious endeavour, in the progress of this discussion, to avoid whatever is calculated to irritate; and, instead of acting the part of a pleader, to advance no argument which has not been well weighed, and of whose validity I am not perfectly convinced. The inquiry will be pursued under two parts: in the first, I shall consider the arguments in favour of *strict communion;* in the second, state, with all possible brevity, the evidence by which we attempt to sustain the opposite practice.

PART I.

ARGUMENTS FOR STRICT COMMUNION CONSIDERED.

In reviewing the arguments which are usually urged for the practice of *strict communion*, or the exclusion of unbaptized persons from the Lord's table, I shall chiefly confine myself to the examination of such as are adduced by the venerable Mr. Booth, in his treatise styled "An Apology for the Baptists," because he is not only held in the highest esteem by the whole denomination, but is allowed by his partisans to have exhibited the full force of their cause. He writes on the subject under discussion with all his constitutional ardour and confidence; which, supported by the spotless integrity and elevated sanctity of the man, have contributed, more perhaps than any other cause, to fortify the Baptists in their prevailing practice. I trust the free strictures which it will be necessary to make on his performance, will not be deemed inconsistent with a sincere veneration for his character, which I should be sorry to see treated with the unsparing ridicule and banter with which he has assailed Mr. Bunyan, a name equally dear to genius and to piety. The reader will not expect me to follow him in his declamatory excursions, or in those miscellaneous quotations, often irrelevant, which the extent of his reading has supplied: it will suffice if I carefully examine his arguments, without omitting a single consideration on which he could be supposed to lay a stress.

SECTION I.

The argument from the Order of Time in which Baptism and the Lord's Supper are supposed to have been instituted.

One of the principal pleas in favour of *strict communion* is derived from the supposed *priority* of the institution of baptism to the Lord's Supper. "That baptism was an ordinance of God," say our opponents, "that submission to it was required, that it was administered to multitudes before the sacred supper was heard of, are undeniable facts. There never was a time since the ministry of our Lord's successors, in which it was not the duty of repenting and believing sinners to be baptized. The venerable John, the twelve apostles, and the *Son of God* incarnate, all united in commanding baptism, at a time when it would have been impious to have eaten bread, and drank wine, as an ordinance of divine worship. Baptism, therefore, had the *priority* in point of institution; which is a presumptive evidence that it has, and ever will have, a prior claim to our obedience. So under the ancient economy *sacrifices* and *circumcision* were appointed and practised in the patriarchal ages: in the time of Moses, the *paschal feast*, and

burning incense in the holy place, were appointed by the God of Israel But the two former, being prior in point of institution, always had the priority in point of administration."*

As this is a leading argument, and will go far towards determining the point at issue, the reader will excuse the examination of it being extended to some length. It proceeds, obviously, entirely on a matter of fact, which it assumes as undeniable, the *priority* in *point of time* of the institution of Christian baptism to that of the Lord's Supper; and this again rests on another assumption, which is the identity of John's baptism with that of our Lord. If it should clearly appear that these were two distinct institutes, the argument will be reversed, and it will be evident that the Eucharist was appointed and celebrated before Christian baptism existed. Let me request the reader not to be startled at the paradoxical air of this assertion, but to lend an impartial attention to the following reasons:

1. The commission to baptize all nations, which was executed by the apostles after our Saviour's resurrection, originated in his *express command;* John's baptism, it is evident, had no such origin. John had baptized for some time before he knew him; it is certain, then, that he did not receive his commission from him. "And I knew him not," saith he, "but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water." If the manifesting Christ to Israel was the end and design of John's mission, he must have been in a previous state of obscurity; not in a situation to act the part of a legislator by enacting laws or establishing rites. John uniformly ascribes his commission, not to Christ, but the Father, so that to assert his baptism to be a *Christian* institute, is not to interpret, but to contradict him. "And I knew him not," is his language, "but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bear record, that this is the Son of God." It was not till he had accredited his mission by many miracles, and other demonstrations of a preternatural power and wisdom, that our Lord proceeded to modify religion by new institutions, of which the Eucharist is the first example. But a Christian ordinance not founded on the authority of Christ, not the effect, but the means of his manifestation, and which was first executed by one who knew him not, is to me an incomprehensible mystery.

2. The baptism of John was the baptism of *repentance*, or reformation, as a preparation for the approaching kingdom of God: the institute of Christ included an explicit profession of faith in a particular person, as the Lord of that kingdom. The ministry of John was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." All he demanded of such as repaired to him was, to declare their conviction that the Messiah was shortly to appear, to repent of their sins, and resolve to frame their lives in a manner agreeable to such an expectation, without requiring a belief in

* Booth's Apology, page 41.

any existing individual as the Messiah. They were merely to express their readiness to *believe on him who was to come*,* on the reasonable supposition that his actual appearance would not fail to be accompanied with attestations sufficient to establish his pretensions. The profession required in a candidate for *Christian* baptism, involved an *historical* faith, a belief in a certain individual, an illustrious personage, who had wrought miracles, declared himself the Son of God, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and rose again the third day. As the conviction demanded in the two cases was *totally distinct*, it was possible for him who sincerely avowed the one to be destitute of the other; and though the rejection of Christ by John's converts would have been criminal and destructive of salvation, it would not have been self-contradictory, or absurd, since he might sincerely believe on his testimony that the Christ was shortly to appear, and make some preparations for his approach, who was not satisfied with his character when he was actually manifested.

That such was the real situation of the great body of the Jewish people at our Lord's advent is evident from the evangelical records. In short, the profession demanded in the baptism of John was nothing more than a solemn recognition of that great article of the Jewish faith, the appearance of the Messiah, accompanied, indeed, with this additional circumstance, that it was nigh at hand. The faith required by the apostles included a persuasion of all the miraculous facts which they attested, comprehending the preternatural conception, the deity, incarnation, and atonement, the miracles, the death, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. In the one was contained a general expectation of the speedy appearance of an illustrious person under the character of the Messiah; in the other, an explicit declaration that Jesus of Nazareth, whose life and death are recorded in the evangelists, was the identical person. But in order to constitute an identity in religious rites two things are requisite—a *sameness* in the corporeal action, and a sameness in the import. The *action* may be the same, yet the rites totally different, or Christian baptism must be confounded with legal Jewish purifications, the greater part of which consisted in a total immersion of the body in water. The diversity of signification, the distinct uses to which they were applied, constitute their only difference, but quite sufficient to render it absurd to consider them as one and the same. And surely he is guilty of a similar mistake who, misled by the exact resemblance of the actions physically considered, confounds the rite intended to announce the future though speedy appearance of the Messiah, without defining his person, and the ceremony expressive of a firm belief in an identical person, as already manifested under that illustrious character.

3. Christian baptism was invariably administered in the *name of Jesus;* while there is sufficient evidence that John's was not performed in that name. That it was not during the first stage of his ministry is certain, because we learn from his own declaration, that when he first

* Acts xix. 4.

executed his commission he did not know him, but was previously apprized of a miraculous sign, which should serve to identify him when he appeared. In order to obviate the suspicion of collusion or conspiracy, circumstances were so arranged that John remained ignorant of the person of the Saviour, and possessed, at the commencement of his career, that knowledge only of the Messiah which was common to enlightened Jews. If we suppose him at a subsequent period to have incorporated the name of Jesus with his institute, an alteration so striking would unquestionably have been noticed by the evangelists, as it must have occasioned among the people much speculation and surprise, of which, however, no traces are perceptible. Besides, it is impossible to peruse the gospels with attention without remarking the extreme reserve maintained by our Lord with respect to his claim to the character of Messiah; that he studiously avoided, until his arraignment before the high-priest, the public declaration of that fact; that he wrought his principal miracles in the obscure province of Galilee, often accompanied with strict injunctions of secrecy; and that the whole course of his ministry, till its concluding scene, was so conducted as at once to afford sincere inquirers sufficient evidence of his mission, and to elude the malice of his enemies. In descending from the mount of transfiguration, where he had been proclaimed the Son of God from *the most excellent glory*, he strictly charged the disciples who accompanied him to tell no man of it till he was raised from the dead. The appellation he constantly assumed was that of the Son of man, which, whatever be its precise import, could by no construction become the ground of a criminal charge. When at the feast of dedication, "the Jews came around him in the temple, saying, How long dost thou keep us in suspense? if thou be the Christ, tell us plainly:" he replied, "I have told you, and ye believe not: the works which I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me."* From this passage it is evident that our Lord had not hitherto publicly and explicitly affirmed himself to be the Messiah, or there would have been no foundation for the complaint of these Jews: nor does he on this occasion expressly affirm it, but refers them to the testimony of his works, without specifying the precise import of that attestation. In the progress of his discourse, however, he advances nearer to an open declaration of his Messiahship than on any former occasion, affirming his Father and himself to be one, in consequence of which the people attempt to stone him, as guilty of blasphemy in making himself the Son of God. As his time was not yet come, he still maintains a degree of his wonted caution, and vindicates his assumption of that honour, upon principles far inferior to what he might justly have urged. Yet such was the effect of this discourse, that, in order to screen himself from the fury of his enemies, he found it necessary immediately to retire beyond Jordan. In an advanced stage of his ministry, we find him inquiring of his disciples the prevailing opinions entertained respecting himself; on which they reply, "Some say thou art John the Baptist, others Elias, others Jeremiah, or

* John x. 24, 25.

one of the prophets." That he was the Messiah, was not, it is evident, the opinion generally entertained at that time by such as were most favourably disposed towards his character and pretensions, which it could not fail to have been, had this title been publicly proclaimed: but this was so far from his intention, that when Peter, in the name of the rest of the apostles, uttered that glorious confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," our Lord immediately enjoins secrecy. What he enjoined his disciples not to publish, he certainly did not publish himself, nor for the same reason suffer it to be indiscriminately proclaimed by his forerunner. But if we suppose John to baptize in his name, we must suppose what is equivalent to an explicit declaration of his being the Messiah; for since he on all occasions predicted the speedy appearance of that great personage, the people could not fail to identify with him the individual whose name was thus employed, and all the precautions maintained by our Saviour would have been utterly defeated. For what possible purpose could he forbid his disciples to publish what John is supposed to have promulgated as often as he administered the baptismal rite? and how shall we account on this hypothesis for the diversity of opinion which prevailed respecting his character, among those who were thoroughly convinced of the divine mission of that great prophet? From these considerations, in addition to the total silence of Scripture, the judicious reader, I presume, will conclude without hesitation that John did *not* baptize in the name of Jesus, which is an essential ingredient in Christian baptism; and though it is administered, in fact, in the name of each person of the blessed Godhead, not in that of the Son only, this, instead of impairing, strengthens the argument, by enlarging still further the difference between the two ordinances in question; for none will contend that John immersed his disciples in the name of the Holy Trinity.

4. The baptism instituted by our Lord is in Scripture distinguished from that of the forerunner by the *superior effects* with which it was accompanied; so that, instead of being confounded they are contrasted in the sacred historians. "I indeed," said John, "baptize you with water unto repentance, but there cometh one after me who is mightier than I: he shall baptize you in the Holy Ghost, and in fire." The rite administered by John was a mere immersion in water, unaccompanied with that effusion of the Spirit, that redundant supply of supernatural gifts and graces which distinguished the subjects of the Christian institute. On the passage just quoted, St. Chrysostom has the following comment:—"Having agitated their minds with the fear of future judgment, and the expectation of punishment, and the mention of the axe, and the rejection of their ancestors, and the substitution of a new race, together with the double menace of excision and burning, and by all these means softened their obduracy, and disposed them to a desire of deliverance from these evils, he then introduces the mention of Christ, not in a simple manner, but with much elevation; in exhibiting his own disparity, lest he should appear to be using the language of compliment, he commences by stating a comparison between the benefit bestowed by each. For he did not immediately say, I am not worthy to unloose the

latchet of his shoes; but having first stated the *insignificance* of his own baptism, and shown that it had no effect beyond bringing them to repentance (for he did not style it the water of remission, but of repentance), he proceeds to the baptism ordained by Christ, which was replete with an *ineffable gift*."* This eminent father, we perceive, insists on the prodigious inferiority of the ceremony performed by John to the Christian sacrament, from its being merely a symbol of repentance, without comprehending the remission of sins,† or the donation of the Spirit. The evangelists Mark and Luke, it is true, affirm that John preached the baptism of repentance *for* the remission of sins, whence we are entitled to infer that the rite which he administered, when accompanied with suitable dispositions, was important in the order of preparation, not that it was accompanied with the immediate or actual collation of that benefit.

Such as repented at his call stood fair candidates for the blessings of the approaching dispensation, among which an assurance of pardon the adoption of children, and the gift of the Spirit held the most conspicuous place; blessings of which it was the office of John to excite the expectation, but of Christ to bestow. The effusion of the Spirit, indeed, in the multifarious forms of his miraculous and sanctifying operation, may be considered as equivalent to them all; and this, we are distinctly told, was not given (save in a very scanty manner) during our Lord's abode upon earth, because he was not yet glorified. Reserved to adorn the triumph of the ascended Saviour, the apostles were commanded to wait at Jerusalem until it was bestowed, which was on the day of Pentecost, when "a sound from heaven as of a mighty wind filled the place where they were assembled, and cloven tongues of fire sat upon each of them, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost." This was the first example of that baptism of the Spirit, as the author of which, John asserts the immense superiority of the Messiah, not to himself only, but to all preceding prophets. In the subsequent history, we perceive that this gift was, on all ordinary occasions, conferred in connexion with baptism. In this connexion it is exhibited by St. Peter, in his address on the day of Pentecost: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Thus it was also in the case of Saul of Tarsus. Agreeable to our Lord's prediction of the signs which should accompany them that believe, there is reason to suppose a greater or less measure of these supernatural endowments regularly accompanied the imposition of the hands of the apostles on primitive converts, immediately subsequent to their baptism; which affords an easy solution to the surprise Paul appears to have felt in finding certain disciples at Ephesus, who, though they had been baptized, were yet unacquainted with these communications. "Into what then," he asks, "were ye baptized?" and upon being informed "Into John's baptism," the difficulty vanished.

Since the baptism of the Holy Ghost, or the copious effusion of

* Homily xi. on Matthew.
† Mark i. 4. Luke iii. 3.

spiritual influences, in which primitive Christians were, so to speak, immersed, was appointed to follow the sacramental use of water, under the Christian economy, while the same corporeal action performed by John was a naked ceremony, not accompanied by any such effects, this difference between them is sufficient to account for their being *contrasted* in Scripture, and ought ever to have prevented their being confounded as one and the same institute.

5. The case of the disciples at Ephesus, to which we have just adverted, affords a demonstrative proof of the position for which we are contending; for if John's baptism was the same with our Lord's, upon what principles could St. Paul proceed in administering the latter to such as had already received the former? As I am aware that some have attempted to deny so plain a fact, I shall beg leave to quote the whole passage, which, I am persuaded, will leave no doubt on the mind of an impartial reader:—"It came to pass while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passing through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? but they replied, We have not even heard that there is an Holy Ghost. He said unto them, Into what then were ye baptized? they said, Into John's baptism. Paul replied, John indeed baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him who was to come, that is, on Jesus Christ. And when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus: and when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied." I am conscious that there are not wanting some who contend that the fifth verse* is to be interpreted as the language of St. Paul, affirming that at the command of John, the people were baptized in the name of Jesus. But not to repeat what has already been advanced to show that this is contrary to fact, (for who, I might ask, were the people who at his instigation were baptized in that name, or what traces are in the evangelical history of such a practice, during the period of his ministry?) not to insist further on this, it is obvious that this interpretation of the passage contradicts itself: for if John told the people that they were to believe on him who *was* to come, this was equivalent to declaring that he had not yet manifested himself; while the baptizing in his name as an existing individual would have been to affirm the contrary. Besides, we must remark, that the persons on whom Paul is asserted to have laid his hands were unquestionably the identical persons who are affirmed in the preceding verse to have been baptized; for there is no other antecedent, so that if the meaning of the passage be what some contend for, the sacred historian must be supposed to assert that he laid his hands, not on the twelve disciples at Ephesus, but on John's converts in general, that the Holy Ghost came upon them, and that they spake with tongues and prophesied; which is ineffably absurd.

Either this must be supposed, or the words, which in their original structure are most closely combined, must be conceived to consist of

* "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."—Acts xix 5

two parts, the first relating to John's converts in general, the second to the twelve disciples at Ephesus; and the relative pronoun, expressive of the latter description of persons, instead of being conjoined to the preceding clause, must be referred to an antecedent, removed at the distance of three verses. In the whole compass of theological controversy, it would be difficult to assign a stronger instance of the force of prejudice in obscuring a plain matter of fact; nor is it easy to conjecture what could be the temptation to do such violence to the language of Scripture, and to every principle of sober criticism, unless it were the horror which certain divines had conceived against every thing which bore the shadow of countenancing Anabaptistical error. The ancient commentators appear to have felt no such apprehensions, but to have followed, without scruple, the natural import of the passage.*

6. Independently of this decisive fact, whoever considers the extreme popularity of John, and the multitude of all descriptions who flocked to his baptism, will find it difficult to believe that there were not many in the same situation with these twelve disciples. The annunciation of the speedy appearance of their Messiah was the most welcome of all intelligence to the Jewish people, and did not fail for a time to produce prodigious effects.

The reader is requested to notice the terms employed to describe the effects of John's ministry, and compare them with the language of the historian, in depicting the most prosperous state of the church. "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the coast round about Jordan, and were baptized in Jordan, confessing their sins." Where is such language employed to represent the success of the apostles? *Their* converts are *numerically* stated, and at some distance from our Lord's ascension appear to have amounted to about five thousand, while a great majority of the nation continued impenitent and incredulous. We read of no party formed against the son of Zecha-

* The intelligent reader will not be displeased to see the opinion of St. Austin on this point. It is almost unnecessary to say that it is decisively in our favour; nor does it appear that any of the fathers entertained a doubt on the subject. In consulting the opinion of those who contended that such as were reclaimed from heresy ought to be rebaptized, he represents them as arguing, that if the converts of John required to be rebaptized, much more those who were converted from heresy Since they who had the baptism of John were commanded by Paul to be baptized, not having the baptism of Christ, why do you extol the merit of John, and reprobate the misery of heretics? "I concede to you," says St. Austin, "the misery of heretics: but heretics give the baptism of Christ, which John did not give."

The comment of Chrysostom on the passage under consideration, is equally decisive. "He (Paul) did not say to them that the baptism of John was nothing, but that it was incomplete; nor does he say this simply, or without having a further purpose in view, but that he might teach and persuade them to be baptized in the name of Jesus, which they were, and received the Holy Ghost by the laying on of Paul's hands." In the course of his exposition, he solves the difficulty attending the supposition of disciples at Ephesus, a place so remote from Judea, having received baptism from John. "Perhaps," says he, "they were then on a journey, and went out, and were baptized." But even when they were baptized, they knew not Jesus. Nor does he ask them, Do ye believe on Jesus? but "Have ye received the Holy Ghost?" He knew that they had not received it, but is desirous of speaking to them, that on learning that they were destitute of, they might be induced to seek it. A little afterward he adds, "Well did he (Paul) denominate the baptism of John the baptism of repentance, and not of remission; instructing and persuading them that it was destitute of that advantage: but the effect of that which was given afterward was remission."—*Homily in loco*, vol. iv. Etonæ. I am aware that very learned men have doubted the authenticity of Chrysostom's commentary on the Acts, on account of the supposed inferiority of it to his other expository works. But without having recourse to so violent a supposition, its inferiority, should it be admitted, may be easily accounted for by the negligence, ignorance, or inattention of his amanuensis; supposing (which is not improbable) that his discourses were taken from his lips. From the time he was sixty years of age, he permitted his discourses to be taken down in shorthand, just as he delivered them —*Euseb.* lib. vi. c. 26.

riah, no persecution raised against his followers; and such was the reverence in which he continued to be held after his death, that the scribes and Pharisees, those determined enemies to the gospel, dared not avow their disbelief of his mission, because all the people considered him as a prophet. The historian Josephus, who is generally supposed by the learned to have made no mention of our Saviour, bears decisive testimony to John's merits, and imputes the misfortunes of Herod to the guilt he contracted by putting him to death.*

From these considerations I infer, that if we suppose the converts made by the apostles to have been universally baptized on their admission into the church (a fact not doubted by our opponents), multitudes of them must have been in the same situation with the disciples at Ephesus. How is it possible it should have been otherwise? When the number of his converts was so prodigious, when the submission to his institute appears to have been almost national, when of so small a number as twelve, two at least of the apostles were of his disciples, who can doubt, for a moment, that some at least of the multitudes who were converted on or after the day of Pentecost consisted of such as had previously submitted to the baptism of John? Is it possible that the ministry of the forerunner and of the apostles of our Lord should both have been productive of such great effects among the same people at the distance of a few years, without operating in a single instance in the same direction, and upon the same persons? Among the converts at the day of Pentecost, and at subsequent periods, there must have been no inconsiderable number who had for a time been sufficiently awakened by the ministry of John to comply with this ordinance; yet it is evident from the narrative in the Acts, as well as admitted by our opponents, that Peter enjoined on them all, without exception, the duty of being immersed in the name of Christ. That such a description of persons should need to be converted by the apostles will easily be conceived, if we allow ourselves to reflect on the circumstances of the times. "He was a burning and a shining light," said our Lord, speaking of his forerunner, "and ye were willing for a time to rejoice in his light." This implies that their attachment was transient, their repentance superficial, and that the greater part of such as appeared for a while most determined to press into the kingdom of God, afterward sunk into a state of apathy. The singular spectacle of a prophet arising, after a long cessation of prophetical gifts, his severe sanctity, his bold and alarming address, coinciding with the general expectation of the Messiah, made a powerful impression on the spirits of men, and disposed them to pay a profound attention to his ministry; and from their attachment to every thing ritual and ceremonial, they would feel no hesitation in submitting to the ceremony enjoined. But when the kingdom which they eagerly anticipated appeared to be altogether of a spiritual nature, divested of secular pomp and grandeur; when the sublimer mysteries of the gospel began to be unfolded, and the necessity inculcated of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of

* Antiq. Jud. lib. viii. Colon. 1691.

man, the people were offended; and even of the professed disciples of our Lord, many walked no more with him. A general declension succeeded, so that, of the multitudes who once appeared to be much moved by his ministry and that of his forerunner, the number which persevered was so inconsiderable that all that could be mustered to witness his resurrection amounted to little more than five hundred,*—a number which may be considered as constituting the whole body of the church till the day of Pentecost.

The parable of the house forsaken for a time by an evil spirit, swept and garnished, to which he returned with seven more wicked than himself, it is generally admitted, was designed to represent this temporary reformation of the Jewish nation, together with its subsequent apostacy. The day of Pentecost changed the scene, the power of the ascended Saviour began to be developed; and three thousand were converted at one time. Nor did it cease here; for soon after we are informed of a great multitude of priests who became obedient to the faith; and at a subsequent period St. James reminds the apostle of the gentiles of many myriads of converted Jews, all zealous for the law.

Let me ask, again, is it possible to suppose that none of these myriads consisted of such as had been baptized by John? Were they all, without exception, of that impious class which uniformly held his mission in contempt? It is impossible to suppose it; it is contradicted by the express testimony of Scripture, which affirms two of the apostles to have been his disciples and companions.† But if such as professed their faith in Christ, under the ministry of the apostles, were baptized on that profession, without any consideration of their having been previously immersed by John, or not, what stronger proof can be desired that the institutes in question were totally distinct? Were we satisfied with an *argumentum ad hominem*, with the sort of proof sufficient to silence our opponents, here the matter might safely rest. But independent of their concession, I must add that it is manifest from the whole tenor of the Acts that the baptismal rite was universally administered to the converts to Christianity subsequent to the day of Pentecost. "Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized, *every one* of you:" it is added, almost immediately, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized."

It will possibly be asked, if the rite which the forerunner of our Lord administered is not to be considered as a Christian institute, to what dispensation are we to assign it, since it is manifestly no part of the economy of Moses? We reply, that it was the symbol of a peculiar dispensation, which was neither entirely legal nor evangelical, but occupied an intermediate station, possessing something of the character and attributes of both; a kind of twilight, equally removed from the obscurity of the first and the splendour of the last and perfect economy of religion. *The law and the prophets were till John;* his mission constituted a distinct era, and placed the nation to which he was sent in circumstances materially different from its preceding or

* 1 Cor. xv 6 † John i. 35-37

subsequent state. It was the era of preparation; it was a voice which, breaking through a long silence, announced the immediate approach of the *desire of all nations, the messenger of the covenant, in whom they delighted.* In announcing this event as at hand, and establishing a rite unknown to the law, expressive of that purity of heart and reformation of life which were the only suitable preparations for his reception, he stood alone, equally severed from the choir of the prophets, and the company of the apostles: and the light which he emitted, though it greatly surpassed every preceding illumination, was of short duration, being soon eclipsed and extinguished by that ineffable effulgence before which nothing can retain its splendour.

The wisdom of God in the arrangement of successive dispensations seems averse to sudden and violent innovations, rarely introducing new rites without incorporating something of the old. As by the introduction of the Mosaic, the simple ritual of the patriarchal dispensation was not so properly abolished, as amplified and extended into a regular system of prefigurations of *good things to come*, in which the worship by sacrifices, and the distinction of animals into clean and unclean, reappeared under a new form; so the era of immediate preparation was distinguished by a ceremony not entirely new, but derived from the purifications of the law, applied to a special purpose.* Our Lord incorporated the same rite into his religion, newly modified, and adapted to the peculiar views and objects of the Christian economy, in conjunction with another positive institution, the rudiments of which are perceptible in the passover. It seemed suitable to his wisdom, by such gentle gradations, to conduct his church from an infantine state to a state of maturity and perfection.

Before I dismiss this part of the subject, which has perhaps already detained the reader too long, I must beg leave to hazard one conjecture. Since it is manifest that the baptism of John did not supersede the Christian ordinance, they being perfectly distinct, it is natural to inquire who baptized the apostles, and the hundred and twenty disciples assembled with them at the day of Pentecost. My deliberate opinion is, that, in the Christian sense of the term, they were not baptized at all. From the total silence of Scripture, and from other circumstances which might be adduced, it is difficult to suppose they submitted to that rite after our Saviour's resurrection; and previous to it, it has been sufficiently proved that it was not in force. It is almost certain that some, probably most of them, had been baptized by John, but for reasons which have been already amply assigned, this will not account for their not submitting to the Christian ordinance. The true account seems to be, that the precept of baptism had no *retrospective* bearing; and that, consequently, its obligation extended only to such as were converted to Christianity subsequently to the time of its promulgation. Such as had professed their faith in Christ from the period of his first manifestation could not, without palpable incongruity, recommence that profession, which would have been to cancel and annul their former religious

* The principal part of these consisted in bathing the body in water.

pretensions. With what propriety could the apostles of the Lord, *who had continued with him in his temptations*, place themselves on a level with that multitude which, however penitent at present, had recently demanded his blood with clamorous importunity? not to insist that they had already received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, of which the sacramental use of water was but a figure. They were not converted to the Christian religion subsequently to their Lord's resurrection, nor did the avowal of their attachment to the Messiah commence from that period; and therefore they were not comprehended under the baptismal law, which was propounded for the regulation of the conduct of persons in essentially different circumstances. When St. Paul says, "*As many* of us as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ," his language seems to intimate that there were a class of Christians to whom this argument did not apply.*

Having proved, I trust, to the satisfaction of the candid reader, that baptism, considered as a Christian institution, had no existence during the personal ministry of our Saviour, the plea of our opponents, founded on the supposed *priority* of that ordinance to the Lord's Supper, is completely overruled; whatever weight it might possess, supposing it were valid, must be wholly transferred to the opposite side, and it must be acknowledged, either that they have reasoned inconclusively, or have produced a demonstration in our favour. It now appears that the original communicants at the Lord's table, at the time they partook of it, were, with respect to the Christian baptism, precisely in the same situation with the persons they exclude.

SECTION II.

The Argument for strict Communion, from the Order of Words in the Apostolic Commission, considered.

The commission which the apostles received after our Lord's resurrection was in the following words:—"All power is given to me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you." From baptism being mentioned *first* after teaching, it is urged that it ought invariably to be administered immediately after effectual instruction is imparted, and consequently before an approach to the Lord's table. Whence it is concluded, that to communicate with such as are unbaptized is a violation of Divine order.†

It may assist the reader to form a judgment of the force of the

* Rom. vi. 3.

† "Teach," says Mr. Booth, "is the high commission, and such the express command of him who is *Lord of all*, when addressing those who are called to preach his word, and administer his institutions. Hence it is manifest the commission and command are first of all to teach: what then?—to baptize, or to administer the Lord's Supper? I leave common sense to judge; and being persuaded that she will give her verdict in my favour, I will venture to add, a limited commission implies a prohibition of such things as are not contained in it; and positive laws imply their *negative*.

"For instance, when God commanded Abraham to circumcise all his males, he readily concluded that neither circumcision, nor any rite of a similar nature, was to be administered to his females.

argument adduced on this occasion, if we reduce it to the following syllogism:

The persons who are to be taught to observe all things given in charge to the apostle, are the baptized alone.

But the Lord's Supper is one of these things.

Therefore the ordinance of the Lord's Supper ought to be enjoined on the baptized alone.

Here it is obvious that the conclusion rests entirely upon this principle, that *nothing* which the apostles were commissioned to enjoin on believers is to be recommended to the attention of persons not baptized; since, as far as this argument is concerned, the observation of the Lord's Supper is supposed not to belong to them, merely because it forms a part of those precepts. It is obvious, if the reasoning of our opponents be valid, it militates irresistibly against the inculcation of every branch of Christian duty, on persons who in their judgment have not partaken of the baptismal sacrament: it excludes them, not merely from the Lord's Supper, but from every species of instruction appropriate to Christians; nor can they exhort Pedobaptists to walk worthy of their high calling, to adorn their Christian profession, to cultivate brotherly love, or to the performance of any duty resulting from their actual relation to Christ, without a palpable violation of their own principles. In all such instances they would be teaching them to observe injunctions which Christ gave in charge to the apostles for the regulation of Christian conduct, while they deem it necessary to repel them from the sacrament, merely on account of its forming a part of those injunctions. Nor can they avoid the force of this reasoning, by objecting, that though it may be their duty to enjoin on unbaptized believers some parts of the mind of Christ respecting the conduct of his mystical members, it will not follow that they are to be admitted to the Lord's table; and that their meaning is, that it is only subsequently to baptism that *all things* ought to be enforced on the consciences of Christians. For if it be once admitted that the clause on which so much stress is laid is not to be interpreted so as absolutely to exclude unbaptized Christians from the *whole* of its import, to what purpose is it alleged against their admission to the Eucharist? or how does it appear that this may not be one of the parts in which they are comprehended?

When the advocates for strict communion remind us of the order in which the two positive institutions of Christianity are enjoined, they appear to assume it for granted that we are desirous of inverting that order, and that we are contending for the celebration of the Eucharist previous to baptism, in the case of a clear comprehension of the nature and obligation of each. We plead for nothing of the kind. Supposing a convert to Christianity convinced of the ordinance of baptism,

And as our brethren themselves maintain, when Christ commanded *believers* should be baptized, without mentioning any others, he tacitly prohibited that ordinance from being administered to *infants*; so, by parity of reason, if the same sovereign Lord commanded that believers should be baptized—baptized *immediately* after they made a profession of faith, then he must intend that the administration of baptism should be prior to a reception of the Lord's Supper, and consequently, tacitly prohibits every unbaptized person having communion at his table."—*Booth's Apology*, p. 31

in the light in which we contemplate it, we should urge his obligation to comply with it, previous to his reception of the sacrament, with as little hesitation as the most rigid of our opponents; nor should we be more disposed than themselves to countenance a neglect of known duty, or a wanton inversion of the order of Christian appointments. Whether in such circumstances the attention of a candidate for Christian communion should first be directed to baptism, is not the question at issue; but what conduct ought to be maintained towards sincere Christians, who, after serious examination, profess their conviction of being baptized already, or who, in any manner whatever, are withheld by motives purely conscientious from complying with what we conceive to be a Christian ordinance. To justify the exclusion of such from the Lord's table, it is not sufficient to allege the prescribed order of the institutions; it is necessary also to evince such a *dependence* of one upon the other, that a neglect of the first from involuntary mistake annuls the obligation of the second. Let this dependence be once clearly pointed out, and we give up the cause. It has been asserted, indeed, with much confidence, that we have the same authority for confining our communion to baptized persons, as the ancient Jews for admitting none but such as had been circumcised to the passover: a simple recital, however, of the words of the law, with respect to that ancient rite, will be sufficient to demonstrate the contrary: "When a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep his passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come and keep it, and he shall be as one that is born in the land; for no *uncircumcised* person shall eat thereof." But where, let me ask, is it asserted in the New Testament that no unbaptized person shall partake of the Eucharist?* So far from this, it has been, I trust, satisfactorily shown, that of the original communicants at its first institution, not one was thus qualified.

I presume it will be acknowledged that the Jewish law was so clear and express in insisting on circumcision as a necessary preparation for partaking of the paschal lamb, that none could mistake it, or approach that feast in an uncircumcised state, without being guilty of wilful impiety; and if it is intended to insinuate the same charge against Pedobaptists, let it be alleged without disguise, that it may be fairly met and refuted. But if it be acknowledged that nothing but such involuntary mistakes, such unintentional errors as are incident to some of the wisest and best of men, are imputable in the present instance, we are at a loss to conceive upon what principle they are compared to wilful prevarication and rebellion. The degree of blame which attaches to the conduct of those who mistake the will of Christ with respect to the sacramental use of water we shall not pretend to determine; but we feel no hesitation in affirming, that the practice of comparing it to a presumptuous violation and contempt of divine law is equally repugnant to the dictates of propriety and of candour. Among the innume-

* "Was it the duty, think you, of an ancient Israelite to worship at the sanctuary, or to partake of the paschal feast, before he was circumcised? Or was it the duty of the Jewish priests to burn incense in the holy place, before they offered the morning or evening service? The appointments of God must be administered in his own way, and in that order which he has fixed."—*Booth's Apology*, p. 143.

rable descendants of Abraham, it is impossible to find one since their departure from Egypt who has doubted of the obligation of circumcision, of the proper subjects of that rite, or of its being an indispensable prerequisite to the privileges of the Mosaic covenant. Among Christians, on the contrary, of unexceptionable character and exalted piety, it cannot be denied that the subject, the mode, and the perpetuity of baptism have each supplied occasion for controversy; which can only be ascribed to the minute particularity with which the ceremonies of the law were enjoined, compared to the concise brevity which characterizes the history of evangelical institutes. We are far, however, from insinuating a doubt on the obligation of believers to submit to the ordinance of baptism, or of its being exclusively appropriated to such; but we affirm that in no part of Scripture is it calculated as a *preparative to the Lord's Supper*, and that this view of it is a mere fiction of the imagination.

When duties are enjoined in a certain series, each of them, on the authority in which they originate, become obligatory; nor are we excused from performing those which stand later in the series, on account of our having, from misconception of their meaning, or from any other cause, omitted the first. To exemplify this by a familiar instance:—It will be admitted that the law of nature enforces the following duties, resulting from the relation of children to their parents: first, to yield implicit obedience in the state of nonage; next, in maturer age, to pay respectful deference to their advice, and a prompt attention to their wants; lastly, after they are deceased, affectionately to cherish their memory, and defend their good name. None will deny that each of these branches of conduct is obligatory, and that this is the order in which they are recommended to our attention. But will it be contended that he who has neglected the first ought not to perform the second; or that he who has failed in the second ought to omit the third? To such an absurd pretence we should immediately reply that they are all *independently* obligatory, as respective dictates of the Divine will; and that for him who has violated one of them to urge his past delinquencies as an apology for the present, would only prove an aggravation of his guilt. It is true that some duties are so situated, as parts or appendages of preceding ones, that their obligation may be said to result from them; as, for example, the duty of confessing Christ before men arises from the previous duty of believing on him; and that of joining a Christian society presupposes the obligation of becoming a Christian. In such cases, however, as the connexion between the respective branches of practice is founded on the nature of things, it is easily perceived, and rarely, if ever, the subject of controversy. In a series of positive precepts, this principle has no place; as they originate merely in arbitrary appointment, their mutual relation can only be the result of clear and express command; and as reason could never have discovered their obligation, so it is as little able to ascertain their intrinsic connexion and dependence, which, wherever it subsists, must be the effects of the same positive prescription which gave them birth. It cannot be pretended that an unbaptized believer is

intrinsically disqualified for a suitable attendance at the Lord's table, or that it is so essentially connected with baptism as to render the act of communion, in itself, absurd or improper. The communion has no retrospective reference to baptism, nor is baptism an anticipation of communion. Enjoined at different times, and appointed for different purposes, they are capable, without the least inconvenience, of being contemplated apart; and on no occasion are they mentioned in such a connexion as to imply, much less to assert, that the one is enjoined *with a view* to the other. Such a connexion, we acknowledge, subsisted between the rites of circumcision and the passover; and all we demand of the advocates of strict communion is, that instead of amusing us with fanciful analogies drawn from an antiquated law, they would point us to some clause in the New Testament which asserts a similar relation between baptism and the Lord's Supper. But here, where the very hinge of the controversy turns, the Scriptures are silent. They direct us to be baptized, and they direct us to commemorate the Saviour's death; but not a syllable do they utter to inform us of the inseparable connexion between these two ordinances. This deficiency is ill supplied by fervid declamation on the perspicuity of our Lord's commission, and the inexcusable inattention or prejudice which has led to a misconception of its meaning; for let the persons whom these charges may concern be as guilty as they may, since they are still acknowledged to be Christians, the questions return, why are they debarred from the communion of saints, and, while entitled to all other spiritual privileges, supposed to be incapacitated from partaking of the symbols of a crucified Saviour? How came the deteriorating effects of their error respecting baptism to affect them but in one point, that of their eligibility as candidates for communion, without spreading further? That it just amounts to a forfeiture of this privilege, and of no other, is a conclusion to which, as it is certain it cannot be established by reason, we ask to be conducted by revelation; and we entreat our opponents for information on that head again and again, but entreat in vain.

Were we to judge from the ardent attachment which the abetters of strict communion, on all occasions, profess to the positive institutes of the gospel, we should suppose that the object of their efforts was to raise them to their just estimation, and to rescue them from desuetude and neglect. We should conjecture that they arose from a solicitude to revive certain practices which had prevailed in the purest ages of the church, but were afterward laid aside, just as the ordinance of preaching was, during the triumph of the papacy, almost consigned to oblivion; and that the consequence of complying with their suggestions would be a more complete exhibition of Christianity in all its parts. But their zeal operates in quite a contrary direction. The success of their scheme tends not to extend the practice of baptism, no, not in a single instance, but merely to exclude the Lord's Supper. Leaving the former appointment unaltered and untouched, it merely proposes to abolish the latter; and, as far as it is practicable, to lay the Christian world under an interdict. The real state of the case is

as follows :—On the subject of baptism, and particularly whether it is applicable to infants, opinions are divided, and the majority have come, as we conceive, to an erroneous conclusion. How do they propose to remedy this evil? By throwing all manner of obstacles in the way of an approach to the Lord's table, and, as far as their power extends, rendering it impracticable, by clogging it with a condition at which conscience revolts. They propose to punish men for the involuntary neglect of one ordinance, by compelling them to abandon the other; and because they are uneasy at perceiving them perform but one half of their duty, oblige them, as far as lies in their power, to omit the whole. I must confess I feel no partiality for those violent remedies, which, under the pretence of reforming, destroy; or for that passion for order which would rather witness the entire desolation of the sanctuary, than a defalcation of its rites; and in spite of all the efforts of sophistry, I must be permitted to believe that our Lord's express injunction on his followers, "Do this in remembrance of me," is a better reason for the celebration of the communion than can be adduced for its neglect.

SECTION III.

The Argument from Apostolical Precedent, and from the different Significations of the two Institutions, considered.

In vindication of their practice, our opponents are wont to urge the order of administration in the primitive and apostolic practice. They remind us that the members of the primitive church were universally baptized; that if we acknowledge its constitution in that respect to be expressive of the mind of Christ, we are bound to follow that precedent, and that to deviate from it, in this particular, is virtually to impeach either the wisdom of our Lord or the fidelity of his apostles.*

With respect to the *universality* of the practice of Christian baptism, having already stated our views, it is not necessary to repeat what has already been advanced, or to recapitulate the reasons on which we found our opinion, that it was not extended to such as were converted previous to our Lord's resurrection. Subsequently to that period, we admit, without hesitation, that the converts to the Christian faith submitted to that ordinance, prior to their reception into the Christian church. As little are we disposed to deny that it is at present the duty of the sincere believer to follow their example, and that, supposing him to be clearly convinced of the nature and import of baptism, he would be guilty of a criminal irregularity who neglected to attend to it, pre-

* "The order of administration," says Mr. Booth, "in the primitive and apostolic practice, now demands our notice. That the apostles, when endued with power from on high, understood our Lord in the sense for which we plead, and practised accordingly, is quite evident. Then they that gladly received his word were, what? admitted to the Lord's table? No, but baptized:—*And the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls; and they continued steadfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer.* If our brethren do not look upon the apostolic precedent as expressive of the mind of Christ, and as a pattern for future imitation to the end of the world, they must consider the apostles as either ignorant of our Lord's will or as unfaithful in the performance of it."—*Booth's Apology*, p. 47, 48.

vious to his entering into Christian fellowship. On the obligation of both the positive rites enjoined in the New Testament, and the prior claim of baptism to the attention of such as are properly enlightened on the subject, we have no dispute. All we contend for is, that they do not so depend one upon the other that the conscientious omission of the first forfeits the privilege, or cancels the duty, of observing the second; nor are we able to perceive that what, in the present instance, is styled apostolic precedent, at all decides the question. To attempt to determine under what circumstances the highest precedent possesses the form of law, involves a difficult and delicate inquiry; for while it is acknowledged that much deference is due to primitive example, there were certain usages in apostolical times which few would attempt to revive. There is one general rule, however, applicable to the subject, which is, that no matter of fact is entitled to be considered as an authoritative precedent which *necessarily* arose out of existing circumstances, so that in the then present state of things it could not fail to have occurred. The foundation of this rule is obvious. Nothing is of the nature of law but what emanates from the will of the legislator; but when a particular fact, recorded in an historical narration, is so situated that the contrary would have appeared incongruous or absurd,—in other words, when it could not fail to be the result of previous occurrences, such a fact is destitute of the essential characteristic of a law; it has no apparent dependence upon a superior will.

Hence many practices occur in the history of the apostolic transactions which it is universally admitted we are not obliged to imitate. It is an unquestionable fact, that the Eucharist was first celebrated with unleavened bread, on the evening, in an upper room, and to Jews only; but as we distinctly perceive that these particulars originated in the peculiar circumstances of the time, we are far from considering them as binding. On the same principle we account for the members of the primitive church consisting only of such as were baptized, without erecting that circumstance into an invariable rule of action. When we recollect that no error or mistake subsisted, or could subsist, among Christians at that period, we are compelled to regard it as the necessary consequence of the state of opinions then prevalent. While all the faithful concurred in their interpretation of the law which enjoins it, how is it possible to suppose it neglected? or whence could rebaptized communicants have been drawn? Is this circumstance, to which so much importance is attached, of such a nature that no account can be given of it, but upon the principle of our opponents? or is it the necessary consequence of the then actual situation of the church? If the latter be admitted, it ceases, for the reason already alleged, to be a precedent, or a rule for the direction of future times.

We are willing to go a step further, and to acknowledge that he who, convinced of the divine origin of Christianity by the ministry of the apostles, had refused to be baptized, would at that period have been justly debarred from receiving the sacramental elements. While the apostles were yet living, and daily exemplifying the import of their commission before the eyes of the people, it would have been impos-

sible to pretend ignorance; nor could that sincerity fail to be suspected, which was not accompanied with an implicit submission to their authority.

"He that receiveth you," saith our Lord, "receiveth me; he that rejecteth you, rejecteth me." Agreeably to which we find that the disciple whom Jesus loved did not scruple to use the following language:—"By this ye know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error; he that is of God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us." Such a conduct was perfectly proper. As there can be but two guides in religion, reason and authority, and every man must form his belief, either by following the light of his own mind or the information and instruction he derives from others; so it is equally evident it is only by the last of these methods that the benefit of a new revelation can be diffused. Either we must suppose an infinite multitude of miracles performed on the minds of individuals to convey the knowledge of supernatural truths, or that one or more are thus preternaturally enlightened, and invested with a commission to speak in the name of God to others; endowed, at the same time, with such peculiar powers, such a control over nature, or such a foresight of future contingencies, as shall be sufficient to accredit and establish his mission.

He who refuses to submit to the guidance of persons thus attested and accredited must be considered as virtually renouncing the revelation imparted, and, as the necessary consequence, forfeiting his interest in its blessings. On these grounds it is not difficult to perceive that a primitive convert, or rather pretended convert, who, without doubting that baptism, in the way in which we practise it, formed a part of the apostolic commission, had refused compliance, would have been deemed unworthy Christian communion, not on account of any specific connexion between the two ordinances, but on account of his evincing a spirit totally repugnant to the mind of Christ. By rejecting the only authority established upon earth for the direction of conscience, and the termination of doubts and controversies, he would, undoubtedly have been repelled as a contumacious schismatic. But what imaginable resemblance is there between such a mode of procedure and the conduct of our Pedobaptist brethren, who oppose no legitimate authority, impeach no part of the apostolic testimony, but mistaking (in our judgment at least) its import in one particular, decline a practice which many of them would be the first to comply with, were they once convinced it was the dictate of duty and the will of Heaven? In the one case we perceive open rebellion, in the other involuntary error; in the one the pride which opposes itself to the dictates of inspired wisdom, in the other a specimen (an humbling one it is true) of that infirmity, in consequence of which we all see but in part, and know but in part. Since, whatever degree of prejudice or inattention we may be disposed to impute to the abetters of infant sprinkling, the principles on which they proceed are essentially different from those which could alone have occasioned the introduction of that practice in apostolic times, we are at a loss to conceive the propriety of classing them together, or of animadverting upon them with equal severity. The apostles would have

repelled from their communion men who, while they professed to be followers of Christ, refused submission to his inspired messengers; in other words, they would have rejected some of the worst of men: therefore, say our opponents, we feel ourselves justified in excluding multitudes whom we acknowledge to be the best. I am at a loss whether most to admire the logic, the equity, or the modesty of such a conclusion.

Besides, this reasoning from precedent is of so flexible a nature that it may with equal ease be employed in a contrary direction, and be turned to the annoyance of our opponents. As it is an acknowledged fact, that in primitive times all the faithful were admitted to an equality of participation in every Christian privilege; to repel the great majority of them on account of an error, acknowledged not to be fundamental, is at once a wide departure from the apostolic example, and a palpable contradiction to the very words employed in its first institution—"Drink ye all of it; do this in remembrance of me:" words addressed, as has already been proved, to persons who had not received Christian baptism. If it be replied, that though all Christians originally communicated, yet from the period of the Pentecost, at least, they were all previously initiated by immersion, the inquiry returns, were they baptized on account of the necessary connexion of that appointment with the Eucharist, or purely in deference to the apostolic injunction? To assert the former would be palpably begging the question; and if the latter is affirmed, we reply, that as they practised as they did in deference to the will of God, so our Pedobaptist brethren, in declining the practice which we adopt, regulate their conduct by the same principle.

The show of conformity to apostolic precedent is with the advocates of strict communion, and nothing more; the substance and reality are with us. Their conformity is to the letter, ours to the spirit; theirs circumstantial and incidental, ours radical and essential. In withholding the signs from those who are in possession of the thing signified, in refusing to communicate the symbols of the great sacrifice to those who are equally with themselves sprinkled by its blood and sharers of its efficacy, in dividing the regenerate into two classes, believers and communicants, and confining the church to the narrow limits of a sect, they have violated more maxims of antiquity, and receded further from the example of the apostles, than any class of Christians on record.

We live in a mutable world, and the diversity of sentiment which has arisen in the Christian church on the subject of baptism has placed things in a new situation, and has given birth to a case which can be determined only by an appeal to the general principles of the gospel, and to those injunctions in particular which are designed to regulate the conduct of Christians, whose judgment in points of secondary moment differs. These we shall have occasion to discuss in another part of this treatise, where it will, we trust, be satisfactorily shown that we are furnished with a clew fully sufficient for our guidance: and when we consider the impossibility of comprehending, in any code whatever, every possible combination of future occurrences and events, we shall perceive the necessity of having recourse to those large and

comprehensive maxims which the prospective wisdom of the Father of lights and the Author of revelation has abundantly supplied.

Were it not that more are capable of numbering arguments than of weighing them, the mention of the following might be omitted. The significations of the two positive ordinances of the gospel are urged in proof of the necessity of baptism preceding the Lord's Supper. The first, we are reminded by our opponents, is styled by theologians the sacrament of *regeneration*, or of initiation; the second, the sacrament of nutrition.* To argue from metaphors is rarely a conclusive mode of reasoning; but if it were, the regenerate state of our Pedobaptist brethren would surely afford a much better reason for admitting them to the *sacrament of nutrition*, than their misconception of a particular command for prohibiting them, unless we choose to affirm that the shadow is of more importance than the substance, or that the sacrament of nutrition is not intended to nourish.

Their actual possession of spiritual life in consequence of their union to the Head of the church, necessarily implies a title to every Christian privilege by which such a life is cherished and maintained, unless there were an express prohibition to the contrary; nor is it to be doubted that the acknowledgment of Pedobaptists as Christians, implies a competence to enter into the full import of the rites commemorative of our Lord's death and passion. To consider the Lord's Supper, however, as a mere commemoration of that event is to entertain a very inadequate view of it. If we credit St. Paul, it is also a *federal rite* in which, in token of our reconciliation with God, we eat and drink in his presence: it is a feast upon a sacrifice, by which we become partakers at the altar, not less really, though in a manner more elevated and spiritual, than those who under the ancient economy presented their offerings in the temple. In this ordinance, the cup is a spiritual participation of the blood, the bread of the body of the crucified Saviour:† and as our Pedobaptist brethren are allowed to be in covenant with God, their title to every federal rite follows of course, unless it is barred by some clear unequivocal declaration of Scripture; instead of which, we meet with nothing on the opposite side but precarious conjectures and remote analogies.

Our opponents are extremely fond of representing baptism under the New Testament as essential as circumcision under the Old, inferring from thence that no unbaptized person is admissible to the Eucharist, for the same reason that no one who was not circumcised was permitted to partake of the paschal feast. But besides that this is to reason from analogy, a practice against which, when applied to the discussion of positive institutes, they on other occasions earnestly protest, the analogy fails in the most essential points. Circumcision is expressly stated as a necessary condition of admission to the passover: a similar statement

* "In submitting to baptism," says Mr. Booth, "we have an emblem of our union and communion with Jesus Christ, as our great Representative, in his death, burial, and resurrection. And as in baptism we profess to have renewed spiritual life, so in communicating at the Lord's table we have the emblems of that heavenly food by which we live, by which we grow, and by virtue of which we hope to live for ever. Hence theological writers have often called baptism the sacrament of *regeneration*, or of initiation, and the Lord's Supper the sacrament of *nutrition*."—*Booth's Apology*.

† 1 Cor. xi. 26.

respecting baptism will decide the controversy. The neglect of circumcision, which could proceed from nothing but presumptuous impiety incurred the sentence of *excision: that soul shall be cut off from the people.* Whatever may be meant beside by that commination, it will not be doubted that it included the entire forfeiture of the advantages of that peculiar covenant which God was pleased to establish with the Israelitish people: and the exclusion from the paschal feast, as well as from the other sacrifices, was the necessary appendage of that forfeiture.

The most violent Baptist will not presume to insinuate that the neglect of baptism from a misconception of its nature is exposed to a similar penalty. It is evident from the history of the Old Testament, that an Israelite became disqualified for sharing in whatever privileges distinguished that nation only in consequence of such a species of criminality as cut him off from the covenant. An interest in that covenant (the particular nature of which it is not necessary to insist upon) and a free access to all the privileges and institutions of the Jewish people were inseparable, so that nothing would have appeared to an ancient Jew more absurd than to disunite the covenant itself from the federal rites by which it was ratified and confirmed. The invention of this ingenious paradox belongs exclusively to the abetters of strict communion, who in the same breath affirm that Pedobaptists are entitled to all the blessings of the new and everlasting covenant, and forbidden to commemorate it; and scruple not to assert, that though interested as much as themselves in the great sacrifice, it would be presumption in them to approach the sacred symbols, which are appointed for no other purpose but to hold it forth. It is certainly with a very ill grace that the champions of such monstrous and unparalleled positions ridicule their opponents for inventing a new and eccentric theology.*

Before I dismiss this head I must remark, that in insisting upon the prior claim which baptism possesses to the attention of a Christian convert, the advocates of strict communion triumph without an opponent. We know of none who contend for the propriety of inverting the natural order of the Christian sacraments where they can both be attended to, that is, when the nature of each is clearly understood and confessed. To administer them under any other circumstance, it will be acknowledged, is impracticable. We administer baptism, let it be remembered, *in every instance* in which our opponents will allow it ought to be administered; and the only difference is, that we have fellowship in another ordinance with those members of the body of Christ whom they reject. Let it once be demonstrated that the obligation of commemorating the Saviour's death is not sufficiently supported by his

* "The last century," says Mr. Booth, page 36, "was the grand era of improvement, of prodigious improvement, in light and liberty: in light, as well divine as philosophical, by the labours of a Bacon, a Boyle, and a Newton; in pretended theological knowledge by those of a Jesse or a Bunyan. Did the former, by deep researches into the system of nature, surprise and instruct the world by discoveries of which mankind had never before conceived? The latter, penetrating into the gospel system, amused mankind by casting new light on the positive institutions of Jesus Christ, and by placing baptism among things of little importance in the Christian religion, of which no ancient theologian ever dreamed—none, we have reason to think, that ever loved the Lord Redeemer." A little after he adds, "The practical claim of dispensing power by Jesse and Bunyan made way for the *inglorious* liberty of treating positive institutions in the house of God just as professors please."

express injunction, but derives its force and validity from its inseparable connexion with a preceding sacrament, and we are prepared to abandon our practice, as a presumptuous innovation on the laws of Christ. Till then, we shall not be much moved by the charge of claiming a dispensing power, with which we are frequently accused,—a power which I presume no Protestant ever dreamed of usurping, and the assumption of which implies such impiety as ought to render a Christian reluctant to urge such a charge.

To remind us of "the destruction of Nadab and Abihu by fire from heaven, the breach that was made upon Uzzah, the stigma fixed and the curses denounced upon Jerusalem, together with the fall and ruin of all mankind by our first father's disobedience to a positive command," is more calculated to inflame the passions than to elicit truth, or conduct the controversy to a satisfactory issue. When the sole inquiry is, what *is* the law of Christ, and we are fully persuaded that our interpretation of it is more natural and reasonable than that of our opponents, it is not a little absurd to charge us with assuming a claim of dispensing with its authority. We know that he commanded his followers to be baptized; we know also that he commanded them to show forth his death till he came: but where shall we look for a tittle of his law which forbids such as sincerely though erroneously believe themselves to have complied with the first to attend to the last of these injunctions? Where is the scriptural authority for *resting* the obligation of the Eucharist, not on the precept that enjoins it, but on the previous reception of baptism? As the Scripture is totally silent on this point, we are not disposed to accept the officious assistance of our brethren in supplying its deficiency; and beg permission to remind them, that to add to the Word of God is equally criminal with taking away from it.

Do we neglect the administration of that rite to any class of persons whose state of mind is such as would render it acceptable to God? Do we neglect to illustrate and enforce it in our public ministrations? Are we accustomed to insinuate that serious inquiry into the mind of Christ on this subject is of little or no importance? Are we found to decline its administration in any case whatever in which our accusers would not equally decline it? Nothing of this can be alleged. Do they argue from the language of the original institute, from the examples of Scripture, and the precedent of the early ages, that it is the duty of believers, without exception, to be immersed in the name of Jesus? So do we. Are they disposed to look upon such as have neglected, whether from inattention or prejudice, to perform this duty, as *mistaken Christians?* We also consider them in the same light. In what respect, then, are we guilty of dispensing with divine laws? Merely because we are incapable of perceiving that an involuntary mistake on this subject disqualifies for Christian communion. But how extremely unjust to load us on that account with the charge of assuming a dispensing power, when the only ground on which we maintain our opinion, whether true or false, is our conviction that it is founded on a legitimate interpretation of the oracles of God. The dispute is not concerning

their authority, but their meaning; and we dispense with baptism in no other sense than that of denying it to be in all cases essential to communion; in which, whether we are mistaken or not, is a point open to controversy; but to be guilty, first of a *misnomer* in defining our sentiments, and afterward to convert an odious and erroneous appellation into an argument, is the height of injustice.

With what propriety our practice is compared to that of the Church of Rome, in confining the communion to one kind, the intelligent reader will be at no loss to perceive.* In that, as in various other instances, that church, in order to raise the dignity of the priesthood, assumes a power of mutilating a divine ordinance. We are chargeable with no mutilation, nor presume in the smallest particular to innovate in the celebration of either sacrament; we merely refuse to acknowledge that dependence, one upon the other, on which the confidence of our opponents is so ill sustained by the silence of Scripture.

We will close this part of the discussion by remarking, that there is a happy equivocation in the word *dispense*, which has contributed not a little to its introduction into the present controversy. It may either mean that we do not insist upon baptism as an indispensable condition of communion, in which sense the charge is true, but nothing to the purpose, since it is a mere statement, in other words, of our actual practice; or it may intend that we knowingly and deliberately deviate from the injunctions of Scripture,—a serious accusation, which requires not to be asserted, but proved.

SECTION IV.

Our supposed Opposition to the Universal Suffrages of the Church considered.

In admitting to our communion those whom we esteem *unbaptized*, we are accused of a presumptuous departure from the sentiments of all parties and denominations throughout the Christian world, who, however they may have differed upon other subjects, have unanimously concurred in considering baptism as a necessary preliminary to communion.†

* "It must, I think, be acknowledged," says Mr. Booth, "even by our brethren themselves, that we have as good a warrant for omitting an essential branch of an ordinance, or to reverse the order in which the *constituent parts* of an ordinance were originally administered, as we have to lay aside a divine institution, or to change the order in which two different appointments were first fixed And if so, were a reformed and converted Catholic, still retaining the popish error of communion in *one kind* only, desirous of having fellowship with our brethren at the Lord's table, they must, if they would act consistently, on their present hypothesis, admit him to partake of the bread, though, from a principle of conscience, he absolutely refused the wine in that sacred institution."—*Booth's Apology*, p. 51.

† This charge is urged with much declamatory vehemence by Mr Booth, in his Apology .—"A sentiment so peculiar, and a conduct so uncommon," he says, "in regard to this institution, ought to be well supported by the testimony of the Holy Ghost. For, were all the Christian churches now in the world asked, except those few who plead for free communion whether they thought it lawful to admit *unbaptized* believers to fellowship at the Lord's table, there is reason to believe they would readily unite in the declaration of Paul, *We have no such custom, neither the churches of God that were before us.* Yes, considering the novelty of their sentiments and conduct, and what a contradiction they are to the faith and order of the whole Christian church; considering that it never was

The first remark which occurs on this mode of reasoning is, that it is merely an *argumentum ad verecundiam*,—an attempt to overawe by the weight of authority, without pretending to enter into the merits of the controversy. It assumes for its basis the impossibility of the universal prevalence of error, which if it be once admitted, all hopes of extending the boundaries of knowledge must be relinquished. My next observation is, that it comes with peculiar infelicity from the members of a sect who, upon a subject of much greater moment, have presumed to relinquish the precedent, and arraign the practice of the whole Christian world, as far at least as they have been exhibited in these later ages.

"Quis tulerit Gracchos, de seditione querentes?"

After setting an example of revolt, it is too late for them to inculcate the duty of submission.

The question of the necessary dependence of communion on baptism being of no practical moment whatever in any other circumstances than our own, it is not to be wondered at if it has never been subjected to scrutiny; since cases of conscience, among which this inquiry may be classed, are rarely if ever investigated until circumstances occur which render their discussion necessary. But as infant-sprinkling is valid in the esteem of all but the Baptists, and there is no pretence for considering the latter as unbaptized, it is not easy to conceive what motive could exist for making it an object of serious attention. That crude and erroneous conceptions should prevail upon questions the decision of which could have no influence on practice, will not surprise those who reflect that truth has been usually elicited by controversy, and that on subjects of too great importance to be entirely overlooked, opinions have prevailed to a great extent which are now universally exploded. Though the employment of coercion in the affairs of conscience is equally repugnant to the dictates of reason and of Scripture, it was for ages successively resorted to by every party in its turn; nor was it till towards the close of the seventeenth century that the principle of toleration was established on a broad and scientific basis, by the immortal writings of Milton and Locke. These reflections are obvious; but there are others which tend more immediately to annihilate the objection under consideration. It is well known that from a very early period the most extravagant notions prevailed in the Church with respect to the efficacy of baptism, and its absolute necessity in order to attain salvation. The descent of the human mind from the spirit to the letter, from what is vital and intellectual to what is ritual and external in religion, is the true source of idolatry and superstition in all the multifarious forms they have assumed; and as it began early to corrupt the religion of nature, or, more properly, of patriarchal tradition, so it soon obscured the lustre, and destroyed the simplicity of the

disputed, as far as I can learn, prior to the sixteenth century, by orthodox or heterodox, by Papist or Protestant, whether *unbaptized* believers should be admitted to the Lord's table, they all agreeing in the contrary practice, however much they differed in matters of equal importance; it may be reasonably expected, and it is by us justly demanded, that the truth of their sentiment, and the rectitude of their conduct, should be *proved, fully proved*, from the records of inspiration."—*Booth's Apology*, p. 43.

Christian institute. In proportion as genuine devotion declined, the love of pomp and ceremony increased; the few and simple rites of Christianity were extolled beyond all reasonable bounds; new ones were invented, to which mysterious meanings were attached, till the religion of the New Testament became, in process of time, as insupportable a yoke as the Mosaic law. The first effects of this spirit are discernible in the ideas entertained of the ordinance so closely connected with the subject of the present treatise. From an erroneous interpretation of the figurative language of a few passages in Scripture, in which the sign is identified with the thing signified, very similar to the mistake which afterward led to transubstantiation, it was universally supposed that baptism was invariably accompanied with a supernatural effect, which totally changed the state and character of the candidate, and constituted him a child of God and an heir of the kingdom of heaven. Hence it was almost constantly denoted by the terms *illumination*, *regeneration*, and others, expressive of the highest operations of the Spirit; and as it was believed to obtain the plenary remission of all past sins, it was often, in order to ensure that benefit, purposely deferred to the latest period of life. Thus Eusebius informs us that the Emperor Constantine, "finding his end fast approaching, judged it a fit season for purifying himself from his offences, and cleansing his soul from that guilt which in common with other mortals he had contracted, which he believed was to be effected by the power of mysterious words, and the saving laver." "This," said he, addressing the surrounding bishops, "is the period I have so long hoped and prayed for, the period of obtaining the salvation of God." Passing with the utmost rapidity through the preparatory stage, that of a catechumen, he hastened to what he regarded as his consummation; and no sooner was the ceremony completed, than he arrayed himself in white garments, and laid aside the imperial purple, in token of his bidding adieu to all secular concerns.* We have here a fair specimen of the sentiments which were universally adopted upon this subject in ancient times. Even Justin Martyr, who flourished about the middle of the second century, confounds baptism with regeneration. "Whoever," says he, "believe the things which are affirmed by us to be true, and promise to live accordingly, are afterward conducted to a place where there is water, and are regenerated by the same method of regeneration which we have experienced."† Theophilus, a contemporary writer, and the sixth bishop of Antioch, holds the same language. Tertullian, the earliest and most learned of the Latin fathers, exclaims, with rapture, "O happy sacrament, by which, being washed from the former sins of our blindness, we are delivered unto eternal life."‡ And agreeable to the fantastic style of imagery which characterizes his writings, he appears to be particularly delighted with denominating Christians little fishes, who are born in water, and are safe only in that element. Were we to attempt accurately to trace the progress of these opinions in the first ages, and adequately to represent the extent of their prevalence,

* Eusebius in Vitâ Constantini, lib. iv. c. 61, 62.
† Apol p. 159, Ed. 1651.
‡ De Baptismo, p. 224, Ed. 1676.

we should be under the necessity, by numberless quotations from the fathers, of extending this inquiry to a most unreasonable length.

Suffice it to remark, that there is scarcely a writer in the first three centuries, to descend no lower, who has not spoken upon this subject in a manner which the advocates for strict communion at least would deem unscriptural and improper: scarcely one from whom we should not be taught to infer that baptism was absolutely necessary to salvation. That this is the doctrine which pervades the formularies of the Church of England is too evident to require to be insisted on; nor is it less so, that similar sentiments on this head are exhibited, to a greater or less extent, in the creeds of most, if not all, established churches. Is it surprising, then, that those who contend for baptism as essential to salvation should consider it as an essential prerequisite to communion? Or is it not a much juster occasion for surprise, that our opponents should urge us with an inference which it is acknowledged was deduced from erroneous premises; as though we were under the necessity of admitting a conclusion, while the only argument by which it is supported is given up?*

For our parts, we must be permitted to look with suspicion on the genuine product of error; no more expecting to derive truth from erroneous premises than grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles. In the present instance, there is no doubt that the opinion of the absolute necessity of baptism previous to communion sprang from those lofty and superstitious ideas respecting its efficacy which our opponents would be the first to disclaim. Ask a Roman Catholic, a Lutheran, or a member of the Church of England, on what ground he rests the absolute necessity of the baptismal rite as a qualification for the Eucharist, and each of them will concur in reminding you, that it is by that ordinance we become the children of God and heirs of his kingdom. The Augsburg Confession, to which all the Lutheran churches are supposed to assent, and which was solemnly presented to Charles the Fifth at the imperial diet, as the authentic exhibition of their sentiments, expresses itself in the following terms:—"Concerning baptism, they (the followers of Luther) teach, that it is *necessary to salvation;* that by baptism is offered the grace of God; and that children are to be baptized, who, being presented to God by baptism, are received into the grace of God. They condemn the Anabaptists, who disapprove of the baptism of children, and affirm that children are *saved* without baptism."† Some of the most learned divines of the Church of England have contended that baptism is not only regeneration, but justification; and have made elaborate attempts to explode every other notion of that blessing.‡

Such are the principles whence this vaunted unanimity is derived, principles which our brethren reprobate on all occasions, while, with a

* Considering the firm hold which these unscriptural ideas respecting baptism had taken of the minds of men throughout all parts of the Christian world at an early period, and recollecting the confidence with which ancient writers assert the impossibility even of infants being saved without baptism, the practice of infant-sprinkling seems an almost necessary result. Who, with such a conviction, possessed of the common feelings of a parent, could fail to secure to his offspring such infinite benefits?

† Augsburg Confession, Article IX.

‡ See Waterland's Sermon on that subject.

strange inconsistency, they accuse us of presumption in refusing our assent to their legitimate consequences. Let it be recollected also, that the points in which they, in common with ourselves, dissent from a vast majority of the professors of Christianity, are of incomparably more importance than the particular in which they agree: for whether baptism be, on all occasions, a necessary preliminary to communion is a trivial question, compared to that which respects the identity of baptism with regeneration.

The argument from authority, however, when fairly stated, is entirely in our favour; nor would it be easy to assign an example of bolder deviation from the universal practice of the Christian church than the conduct of our opponents supplies. They are the only persons in the world of whom we have either heard or read who contend for the exclusion of genuine Christians from the Lord's table; who ever attempted to distinguish them into two classes, such as are entitled to commemorate their Saviour's death, and such as are excluded from that privilege. In what page of the voluminous records of the church is such a distinction to be traced? Or what intimation shall we find in Scripture of an intention to create such an invidious disparity among the members of the same body? Did it ever enter the conception of any but Baptists, that a right to the sign could be separated from the thing signified; or that there could be a description of persons interested in all the blessings of the Christian covenant, yet not entitled to partake of its sacraments and seals?

In the judgment of all religious communities besides, and in every period of the church, excommunication or exclusion has been considered as a stigma never to be inflicted but on men of ill lives, or on the abetters of heresy and schism; and though innumerable instances have occurred in which the best of men have, in fact, been excluded, they were either accused of fundamental error, or adjudged, on account of their obstinate resistance to the authority of the church, to have forfeited the privileges of Christians. They were not excommunicated under the character of mistaken brethren, which is the light in which we profess to consider Pedobaptists, but as incurable heretics and schismatics. The puritans were expelled the Church of England on the same principle; and although at the Restoration, a vindictive spirit was unquestionably the chief motive to those disgraceful proceedings, yet the pretensions of ecclesiastical authority were carried so high in those unhappy times as to furnish the pretext for considering them as contumacious contemners of the power, and disturbers of the peace of the church. In the whole course of ecclesiastical proceedings, no maxim was more fully recognised than that the sword of excommunication cut asunder the ties of fraternity, and consigned the offender, unless he repented, to hopeless perdition.

In some dissenting societies also, it is true, creeds are established which every candidate for admission is expected to subscribe; and though these summaries of Christian doctrine frequently contain articles which, admitting them to be true, are not fundamental, they were originally deemed such by their fabricators, or supposed, at least,

to be accompanied with such a plenitude of evidence as no sincere inquirer could resist; and they are continued under the same persuasion.

The right of rejecting those whom Christ has received, of refusing the communion of eminently holy men on account of unessential differences of opinion, is not the avowed tenet of any sect or community in Christendom, with the exception of the majority of the Baptists, who, while they are at variance with the whole world on a point of such magnitude, are loud in accusing their brethren of singularity. If we have presumed to resist the current of opinion, it is on a subject of no practical moment; it respects an obscure and neglected corner of theology; while their singularity is replete with most alarming consequences, destroys at once the unity of the church, and pronounces a sentence of excommunication on the whole Christian world.

Having, without disguise, exhibited, in their full force, the reasoning of the advocates of strict communion, and replied to it in the best manner we are able, it must be left to the impartial reader to determine on which side the evidence preponderates; of which he will be able to judge more completely when we have stated at large the grounds of the opposite practice, which we have reserved for the Second Part of this treatise; where we shall have an opportunity of noticing some minor objections, which could not be so conveniently adverted to in the former

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PART II.

THE POSITIVE GROUNDS ON WHICH WE JUSTIFY THE PRACTICE OF MIXED COMMUNION.

SECTION I.

Free Communion urged from the Obligation of Brotherly Love.

That we are commanded, in terms the most absolute, to cultivate a sincere and warm attachment to the members of Christ's body, and that no branch of Christian duty is inculcated more frequently, or with more force, will be admitted without controversy. Our Lord instructs us to consider it as the principal mark or feature by which his followers are to be distinguished in every age. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another. As I have loved you, ye ought also to love one another;" whence it is evident that the pattern we are to follow is the love which Christ bore to his church, which is undoubtedly extended indiscriminately to every member. The cultivation of this disposition is affirmed to be one of the most essential objects of the Christian revelation, as well as the most precious fruit of that faith by which it is embraced. "Seeing," says St. Peter, "ye have

purified your hearts by obeying the truth unto an unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.' Agreeably to which, the beloved disciple affirms it to be the chief evi dence of our being in a state of grace and salvation. "By this we know that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Let it also be remembered, that the mode in which we are commanded to exhibit and express this most eminent grace of the Spirit is the preservation of union, a careful avoidance of every temper and practice which might produce alienation and division. To this purpose, St. Paul reminds us of that union which subsists between the several parts of the body, the harmony with which its respective functions are carried on, where the noblest organ is incapable of dispensing with the action of the meanest, together with that quick feeling of sympathy which pervades the whole; all which, he tells us, is contrived and adjusted to prevent a schism in the body. In applying this illustration to the subject before us, it is impossible not to perceive that when one part of Christ's mystical body refuses to co-operate with another in a principal spiritual function, such as communing at the Lord's table, that very evil subsists against which we are so anxiously guarded; and, what is more extraordinary, subsists upon the principle we are opposing, by Divine appointment. In the last prayer our Saviour uttered, in which he expressly includes all who should hereafter believe, he earnestly entreats that they may be all one, even as he and his Father were one, that the world might be furnished with a convincing evidence of his mission. For some ages the object of that prayer was realized, in the harmony which prevailed among Christians, whose religion was a bond of union more strict and tender than the ties of consanguinity; and with the appellation of brethren, they associated all the sentiments of endearment that relation implied. To see men of the most contrary character and habits, the learned and the rude, the most polished and the most uncultivated, the inhabitants of countries alienated from each other by institutions the most repugnant, and by contests the most violent, forgetting their ancient animosity, and blending into one mass, at the command of a person whom they had never seen, and who had ceased to be an inhabitant of this world, was an astonishing spectacle. Such a sudden assimilation of the most discordant materials, such love issuing from hearts naturally selfish, and giving birth to a new race and progeny, could be ascribed to nothing but a Divine interposition: it was an experimental proof of the commencement of that kingdom of God, that celestial economy, by which the powers of the future world are imparted to the present. When we turn from contemplating this to the practice under consideration, we see an opposite phenomenon; a sect of Christians coming to an open rupture and separation in point of communion with the whole Christian world; and we ask whether it be possible to reconcile such a conduct with the import of our Saviour's prayer. If it is not, it must be condemned as antichristian, unless we hesitate to affirm, that whatever is repugnant to the mind of Christ merits that appellation. Let it be remembered, too, that though the prayer we have adduced was uttered by Him who possessed a perfect

knowledge of futurity, and was thoroughly apprized of the diversities of sentiment which would arise among his followers, he was not deterred by that consideration from comprehending in this his desire of union all who should hereafter believe on his name.

Whatever attachment our opponents may profess to those whom they exclude, their behaviour, it must be acknowledged, is so ill adapted to accredit their professions, that in the eyes of the world, who judge by sensible appearances, and are strangers to subtle distinctions, such a proceeding will inevitably be considered as a practical declaration that the persons from whom they separate are *not* Christians. There is no reason to doubt that the precepts of the gospel on this as well as every other branch of morals are to be interpreted on a liberal scale; and that when they enjoin any particular disposition in general terms, we must consider the injunction as comprehending all its natural demonstrations, all its genuine expressions. But to refuse the communion of sincere Christians is not a natural expression of Christian love, but so diametrically opposite, that we may fairly put it to the conscience of those who contend for such a measure, whether they find it possible to carry it into execution without an inward struggle, without feeling emotions of sorrow and concern. It is to inflict a wound on the very heart of charity, for no fault, for none at least of which the offender is conscious, for none which such treatment has the remotest tendency to correct; and if this is not being guilty of "beating our fellow-servant," we must despair of ascertaining the meaning of terms.

Were the children of the same parent, in consequence of the different construction they put on a disputed clause in their father's will, to refuse to eat at the same table, or to drink out of the same cup, it would be ridiculous for them to pretend that their attachment to each other remained undiminished; nor is it less so for Christians to assert that their withdrawing from communion with their brethren is no interruption to their mutual harmony and affection. It is a serious and awful interruption, and will ever be considered in that light as long as the interior sentiments of the mind continue to be interpreted by their natural signs. I have known more instances than one of good men complaining of the uneasiness, I might say the anguish, they felt on those occasions, when they witnessed some of their most intimate friends, persons of exalted piety, compelled, after joining in the other branches of worship, to withdraw from the Lord's table, as though "they had no part or lot in the matter." We have been accustomed to conceive that the dictates of the Holy Ghost were always in harmony with his operations, the precepts of the gospel with its spirit; and that nothing was enjoined as matter of duty on Christians which offered violence to the best feelings of the renewed heart. We have always supposed that by the law of Christ we were called to mortify the old man only with his affections and lusts; but if the doctrine of our opponents be true, we shall be frequently summoned to the strange discipline of repressing the movements of Christian charity; and the practice of quenching the Spirit, instead of being regarded with horror, will become on many occasions an indispensable duty. For this new and unheard-of conflict, in which

the injunctions of Christ, and the dictates of his Spirit, propel us in opposite directions, we acknowledge ourselves unprepared.

In order to place this part of our subject in its strongest light, it is necessary to recur to what we have suggested before, respecting the twofold import of the Eucharist, that it is first a feast upon a sacrifice, in which we are actual partakers by faith of the body and blood of the Redeemer offered upon the cross. Considered in this view, it is a *federal rite*, in which we receive the pledge of reconciliation, while we avouch the Lord to be our God, and surround his table as a part of his family. In its secondary import, it is intended as a solemn recognition of each other as members of Christ, and consequently, in the language of St. Paul, "as one body, and one bread." Now we either acknowledge Pedobaptists to be Christians, or we do not. If not, let us speak out without reserve, and justify their exclusion at once, upon a broad and consistent basis. But if we reject a sentiment so illiberal, why refuse to unite with them in an appointment which, as far as its social import is concerned, has no other object than to express that fraternal attachment which we actually feel? Why select as the line of demarkation, the signal of disunion, that particular branch of worship which, if we credit the inspired writers, was ordained, in preference to every other, to be the symbol of Christian unity? That they are equally capable with ourselves of deriving the spiritual edification and improvement attached to this ordinance is implied in the acknowledgment of their being Christians; while with respect to its import as a social act, or an act of communion, it implies neither more nor less than a recognition of their claim to that title. It neither implies that they are baptized, nor the contrary; it has no retrospective view to that ordinance whatever; it implies neither more nor less than that they are members of Christ, and the objects, consequently, of that fraternal attachment which our opponents themselves profess to feel.

SECTION II.

The Practice of open Communion argued, from the express Injunction of Scripture respecting the Conduct to be maintained by sincere Christians who differ in their Religious Sentiments.

We are expressly commanded in the Scriptures to tolerate in the church those diversities of opinion which are not inconsistent with salvation. We learn from the New Testament that a diversity of views subsisted in the times of the apostles between the Jewish and gentile converts especially—the former retaining an attachment to the ancient law, and conceiving the most essential parts of it to be still in force; the latter, from correcter views, rejecting it altogether. Some declined the use of certain kinds of meat forbidden by Moses, which others partook of without scruple; "one man esteemed one day above another," conscientiously observing the principal Jewish solemnities; "another esteemed every day alike." Among the Jewish converts

very different sentiments were entertained on the subject of circumcision, which all appear to have observed, though upon different principles; the more enlightened, like St. Paul, from a solicitude to avoid unnecessary offence; the more superstitious, from persuasion of its intrinsic obligation; and some because they believed it impossible to be saved without it; by which they endangered, to say the least, the fundamental doctrine of justification by faith. Against the sentiment last mentioned we find St. Paul protesting with vehemence, and affirming, with all the authority of his office, that "if any man was circumcised" with such views, Christ "profited him nothing;" but on no occasion proceeding to excommunication. The contention arising from the discussion of these points became so violent, that there appeared no method of terminating it but to depute Paul and Barnabas to go up to Jerusalem to consult the apostles, who, being solemnly convened on the occasion, issued the famous decree contained in the fifteenth of the Acts, by which the liberty of the gospel was confirmed, and the domineering spirit of Jewish zealots repressed. Though the success of this measure was great, it was not complete; a contrariety of opinion and of practice prevailed in the church respecting Jewish ceremonies and observances, which considerably impaired its harmony. But instead of attempting to silence the remaining differences by interposing his authority, St. Paul enjoins mutual toleration. "Him that is weak in faith receive ye, not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things; another who is weak eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth; for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? unto his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."*

To the same purpose are the following injunctions in the next chapter:—"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Now the God of peace and consolation grant you to be like-minded one towards another, according to Jesus Christ that ye may with one mind and with one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God."† It cannot be denied that the passages we have adduced contain an apostolic canon for the regulation of the conduct of such Christians as agree in fundamentals, while they differ on points of subordinate importance: by this canon they are commanded to exercise a reciprocal toleration and indulgence, and on no account to proceed to an open rupture. In order to apply it to the question under consideration, it is only necessary to consider to what description of persons the rule extends. The persons we are commanded to receive are the *weak in faith*. From the context, as well as from other parts of his epistles, it is certain that St. Paul means to designate by that appellation sincere though erring Christians; and in the instance then under con-

* Rom. xiv. 1--5 † Rom. xv. 1, 6, 7

temptation, persons whose organs were not yet attempered to the blaze of gospel light and liberty, but who still clung to certain legal usages and distinctions, which more comprehensive views of revelation would have taught them to discard. The term *weak* is employed by the same writer in his epistle to the Corinthians to denote an *erroneous* conscience, founded on a false persuasion of a certain power and efficacy attached to idols, of which they are really destitute. "For himself," he tells us, "he knew that an idol was nothing, but every one was not possessed of that knowledge; for some with conscience of the idol, with an interior conviction of its power, eat of the sacrifice, as a thing offered to an idol, and their conscience, being *weak*, is defiled." In the chapter whence these words are quoted the term *weak* occurs not less than five times, and in each instance is used as synonymous with *erroneous*. I have insisted the more on this particular in order to obviate a misconception which may arise from the acknowledged ambiguity of the word *weak*, which might be supposed to intend, not a mistaken or erring mind, but a mind not sufficiently confirmed in the truth to which it assents. The certainty of its comprehending the case of error being once admitted, it is not necessary to multiply words to evince its bearing on the present controversy; all that remains to be considered is the *principle* on which toleration is enforced, which every impartial reader must perceive is the assumption that the errors and mistakes to be tolerated are not *fundamental*, not of such a nature, in other words, as to prevent those who maintain them from being accepted with God. "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth; *for God hath received him.*" What can this mean but that the error in question, to whichsoever side it be imputed, was of a description not to exclude its abetter from being an accepted servant of God, who, as he at present bears with his infirmity, is well able, whenever he pleases, to correct and remove it? He further proceeds to urge a spirit of forbearance from a consideration of the perfect integrity with which both parties maintained their respective opinions. Both were equally conscientious, and therefore neither deserved to be treated with severity. "Wherefore receive ye one another," he adds, "even as Christ has received you to the glory of the Father." When he thus commands Christians to receive each other, and enforces that duty by the example of Christ, it surely requires little penetration to perceive that the practice enjoined ought to be commensurate to that example, and that this precept obliges us to receive all whom Christ has received. To interpret it otherwise is to suppose the example irrelevant, and at once to annihilate the principle on which the injunction is founded.

Having paved the way to the conclusion to which we would conduct the reader, we have only to remark, that in order to determine how far these apostolic injunctions oblige us to tolerate the supposed error of our Pedobaptist brethren, we have merely to consider whether it necessarily excludes them from being of the number of those whom Christ has received to the glory of the Father, whether it be possible

to hold it with Christian sincerity, and finally, whether its abetters will stand or fall in the eternal judgment.

If these questions are answered in the way which Christian candour irresistibly suggests, and which the judgment of our opponents approves, they conclude in favour of the admission of Pedobaptists to communion, not less forcibly than if they had been mentioned by name; and all attempts to evade them must prove futile and abortive. If it be asserted, on the contrary, that a mistake on the subject of baptism is not comprehended in the above description, the passages adduced must be acknowledged irrelevant, and the whole controversy assumes a new aspect.

In the same spirit the apostle earnestly presses on the Philippians the obligation of maintaining an uninterrupted harmony, and of cultivating a fraternal affection to each other, even while he is contemplating the possibility of their entertaining different apprehensions respecting truth and duty. After proposing himself as an example of the renunciation of legal hopes, and the serious study of perfection, he adds, "Let us, therefore, as many as are *perfect*, as many as have obtained correct and enlarged views of the gospel, be thus minded; and if in any thing we are otherwise minded, or rather *differently* minded, possessing different views and apprehensions on certain subjects, God will reveal this even unto you.* Nevertheless, wherein we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." Here the case of a diversity of sentiment arising among Christians is distinctly assumed, and the proper remedy suggested, which is not the exercise of a compulsory power, much less a separation of communion, but the ardent pursuit of Christian piety, accompanied with an humble dependence on divine teaching, which, it may reasonably be expected, will in due time correct the errors and imperfections of sincere believers. The conduct to be maintained in the mean while was a cordial cooperation in every branch of worship and of practice, with respect to which they were agreed, without attempting to effect a unanimity by force; and this is precisely the conduct which we contend should be maintained towards our Pedobaptist brethren. If they can be repelled from the Lord's table without violating both the letter and the spirit of the preceding and of similar admonitions, we are prepared, however reluctantly, to acquiesce in their exclusion; but if they cannot, it deserves the serious consideration of the advocates of that measure, how they can reconcile the palpable infringement of such precepts with the scrupulous adherence to the dictates of Scripture to which they make such loud pretensions.

It will surely not be denied that the precepts of the gospel are entitled to at least as much reverence as apostolical precedents, when it is remembered that the language of the former, as is befitting laws, is clear and determinate, while inferences deduced from the latter are frequently subject to debate; not to remark, that if we consider the spirit of Scripture precedent, it will be found entirely in our favour.

* See an admirable criticism on this passage in Bishop Horsley's Sermons, where the word ἕτερως, which is the key to the whole passage, is most happily elucidated.—Vol. ii. p. 358.

When the abetters of exclusive communion are pressed with the conclusions resulting from the passages we have quoted, and others of a similar tendency, their usual answer is, that the inspired writers make no mention of baptism on these occasions, and that no allusion is had to a diversity of opinion on the positive institutions of the gospel; which is perfectly true, and perfectly foreign to the purpose for which it is alleged; for the question at issue is not, What were the individual errors we are commanded to tolerate; but, What is the *ground* on which that measure is enforced, and whether it be sufficiently comprehensive to include the Pedobaptists? That it is so, that they are actually included, can only be denied by affirming that they are precluded from divine acceptance, since it is precisely on that ground that St. Paul rests the plea of toleration. To object to the application of a general principle to a particular case, that it is not the identical one which first occasioned its enunciation, is egregious trifling, and would go to the subversion of all general principles whatever, and consequently put an end to all reasoning. When a doubtful point in morality is to be decided by an appeal to a general principle, it is an essential property of such a principle to extend to more particulars than one; since, if it did not, it would cease to be a principle, and the point in question would be left to be decided by itself; and if not self-evident, could admit of no decision whatever. When Nadab and Abihu, intoxicated with wine, offered strange fire upon the altar, and were struck with instant death for their presumption, Moses, by Divine command, prescribed the following general rule for the worship of God: "I will be sanctified of all them that draw nigh unto me, and before all the people will I be glorified." Who can be at a loss to perceive the absurdity of limiting that precept to the prohibition of intoxication, the crime which occasioned its first promulgation, instead of extending it to every instance of levity and impiety in an approach to the Divine Majesty? My consciousness of the extreme weight of prejudice which the truth has to encounter, together with the inaptitude of many who are most interested in this controversy to ascend to first principles, is my only apology for insisting upon a point so obvious; choosing rather to hazard the contempt of the wise than not to impress conviction on the vulgar.

With such as admit the possibility of Pedobaptists being saved there remains, in my apprehension, no alternative, but either to receive them into their communion without scruple, as comprehended within the apostolic canon, or to affirm that decision to be founded on erroneous grounds; which at once removes the controversy to a superior tribunal, where they and the apostle must implead each other. Let us, however, briefly examine certain distinctions they have recourse to, in order to elude the force of these passages. In the first place, it has been alleged, that though we are commanded to *receive* our mistaken brethren, we are not instructed to receive them at the Lord's table, or into the external communion of the church; and that such injunctions are, consequently, irrelevant to the inquiry respecting the right of persons of a similar character to those external privileges of which they make

no mention. "Is there no way," say our opponents, "of receiving him that is weak in faith, but by admitting him to the Lord's table? Must the exhortation to receive a Christian brother be confined to that single instance of true benevolence?"* To this we reply, that we know of none who assert that the term *receive* must necessarily be limited to the single act of a reception at the Lord's table; but we affirm, without hesitation, that he is not *received* in the sense of the apostle who is denied that privilege. Had the parties whom he addressed proceeded to an open rupture in point of communion, would they, in the judgment of our opponents, have complied with the purport and spirit of his injunction? And if, after adopting such a measure, they had appealed to the apostle, whether there "were no other way of receiving their brethren but by admitting them to the Lord's table," would he, or would he not, have considered himself as mocked and insulted? Mr. Booth enumerates many instances in St. Paul's epistles, in which he enjoins Christians to *receive* certain persons, such as Phœbe, Onesimus, Epaphroditus, and himself, where an admission to the Lord's table was not intended, but something which he informs us would manifest their love in a much higher degree.† What a convincing demonstration of the propriety of withholding from persons of a similar character that lower, that inferior token of esteem which is included in Christian fellowship! And because the bare admission of all the persons mentioned to the external communion of the church did not satisfy the ardent benevolence of the apostle, without more decided and discriminate marks of attachment, nor answer, in the opinion of our opponents, to the full import of the word *receive*, the true method of realizing his intentions is to reject the modern Phœbe and Onesimus altogether.

"Supposing, however," says Mr. Booth, "that there were no way of receiving one that is weak in faith but by admitting him to the Lord's table, this text would be far from proving that which our opponents desire; unless they could make it appear, that the persons of whom the apostle immediately speaks were *not members* of the Church of Rome when he gave the advice."‡ If there be any weight in this argument, it must proceed on the supposition that if the persons whom the apostle enjoins the Romans to receive had not been already members, there is no sufficient ground for believing, notwithstanding the strain of his admonitions, that they would have been admitted. But is it possible to suppose that he would have recommended a class of persons so earnestly to the affectionate regards of a Christian society whom he would not have previously deemed eligible to their communion; or that the primitive discipline was so soon relaxed as to occasion the continuance in the church of such as would have been originally deemed unworthy candidates? Most assuredly they who, upon valid grounds, would have been rejected if they had not already been members, were never permitted to boast the protection and patronage of an inspired apostle after they became such. In every well-ordered society, the privileges attached to it are forfeited by that conduct

* Booth's Apology, p. 101 † Ibid. p 102. ‡ Ibid. p. 82.

in its members, whatever it be, which would have been an effectual obstacle to their admission; and to suppose this maxim reversed in a Christian church, and that an apostle would caress, protect, and commend persons who might justly have been debarred from entering, is an absurdity which few minds can digest. The necessity of recurring to such suppositions is itself a sufficient confutation of the system they are brought to defend.

Our opponents still insist upon it, that no conclusion can be drawn from the command to receive the *weak in faith*, unless it could be shown that they were *unbaptized*. But this mode of reasoning, pursued to its consequences, would annihilate all the general axioms of Scripture,* and, considering the infinite diversity of human circumstances, render them a most incompetent guide. If the Holy Spirit has been pleased to command us, without exception, to receive *the weak in faith*, and instructed us in the grounds on which his decision proceeded, which is plainly the acceptance of such with God,—if the apostles acting under his direction governed the church on the same principles, and suffered no breach of communion to be effected, but on account of a vicious life, or fundamental error, the criminality attached to an opposite course of procedure will be very little extenuated by a circumstantial difference in its objects. Had those whom the apostles commanded their converts to tolerate been *unbaptized*, the inference in favour of Pedobaptists would unquestionably have been more obvious, but not more certain, because nothing can be more evident than that they urged the duty of toleration on a principle which, even in the judgment of our opponents, equally applies to the Pedobaptists, which is, that the error in each case is compatible with a state of salvation, and may be held with an upright conscience.

However systems and opinions may fluctuate, truth is eternal; and if these were solid grounds of mutual forbearance and indulgence heretofore, they must still continue such; but if they were not, St. Paul must be acknowledged to have reasoned inconclusively, and all idea of plenary inspiration must be abandoned. As the case stands, the advocates of exclusive communion must either assert, in direct contradiction to his statement, that the compatibility of an error with the state of salvation, and with what comes nearly to the same point the perfect sincerity of its abetter, is *not* a sufficient reason for its being tolerated in the church, or consign the Pedobaptists who die in their sentiments, to eternal destruction. In this dilemma, they are at liberty to adopt which position they please, but from both it is impossible to escape.

In order, as it should seem, to perplex the mind of the reader on this part of the subject, our opponents endeavour to confound that interposition of mercy by which impenitent sinners are introduced into a state of salvation with the gracious acceptance of believers.†

* "But admitting that to be a fact," says Mr. Booth, "of which there is not the least evidence, the conclusion drawn from the passage would not be just, except it were also proved that the weak in faith were unbaptized, or at least so considered by their stronger brethren, for that is the point in dispute between us."—*Booth's Apology*, p. 104.

† "Yet permit me to ask," says Mr. Booth, "is the Divine conduct, is the favour of God, or the kindness of Christ in receiving sinners the rule of our proceeding in the administration of positive

With this view we are reminded that God receives such as are dead in sins. Whether it be safe to assert that God accepts the impenitent at all while their impenitence continues, I shall not stay to inquire: it is certain they are not received in the *same sense* as genuine Christians, nor in the sense the apostle intended when he enjoined forbearance towards the *weak in faith*. That Christ receives men *in their sins*, so as to adopt them into his family, and make them heirs of eternal life, is a doctrine offensive to pious ears, most remote from the language of Scripture, and from all sober theology. But if they intend something essentially distinct from this, for what purpose it is introduced, except with a view to shelter themselves under the cover of an ambiguous term, I am at a loss to conjecture. In the mean time, it is obvious that the design of these contortions is to get rid, if possible, of a principle which originated not with us, but with St. Paul, that we ought to accept those whom we acknowledge Christ to have accepted. This is still more evident when we find them adducing the excommunication of unworthy members, such as the incestuous man at Corinth, who, it is asserted, was all along an object of Divine favour, as a proof that the rule which that inspired writer has laid down may be safely neglected. In reply to which, it is sufficient to ask—In what light was the incestuous person regarded,* when he declared his determination to deliver him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh? Was it under the character of a member of Christ, or an enemy to the gospel? If we believe his own representation, he deemed it necessary for him to be expelled as an infectious leaven, the continuance of which would corrupt the whole mass; so that whatever proofs of repentance he might afterward exhibit, these could have no influence on the principle on which he was excluded. When the professors of Christianity are guilty of deliberate violation of the laws of Christ, they are to be treated agreeably to the conduct they exhibit, as bad men, with a hope that the severity of discipline may reclaim and restore them to the paths of rectitude.

To justify the practice of exclusive communion, by placing Pedobaptists, who form the great body of the faithful, on the same level with men of impure and vicious lives, is equally repugnant to reason and offensive to charity; at the same time that it is manifest from this mode of reasoning, that the measure contended for is considered in the light of *punishment*. Whether our Pedobaptist brethren are the proper objects of it, or whether it is adopted to promote the only legitimate ends of punishment, must be left to future inquiry.

institutions? Whom does God, whom does Christ receive? None but those who believe and profess faith in the Lord Messiah? Our brethren will not affirm it. For if Divine compassion did not extend to the dead in sin; if the kindness of Christ did not relieve the enemies of God, none of our fellow-race would ever be saved. But does it hence follow that we must admit the unbelieving, or the unconverted, either to baptism or the Holy Supper? Our gracious Lord freely accepts all that desire it, and all that come, but are we bound to receive every one that solicits communion with us?" *Booth's Apology*, p. 106.

* "Besides, gospel churches," says Mr. Booth, "are sometimes obliged to exclude from their communion those whom he has received, as appears from the case of the incestuous person in the church of Corinth And have those churches which practise free communion never excluded any for scandalous backslidings whom, notwithstanding, they could not but consider as received of Christ?"—*Booth's Apology*, p. 106.

SECTION III.

Pedobaptists a Part of the true Church, and their Exclusion on that account unlawful.

Before we proceed to urge the argument announced in this section, it will be necessary to ascertain the precise import of the word *church* as it is employed in the Holy Scriptures. If we examine the New Testament, we shall find that the term church as a religious appellation occurs in two senses only; it either denotes the whole body of the faithful, or some one assembly of Christians associated for the worship of God. In the former sense, it is styled in the Apostles' Creed, catholic, or universal; a belief in the existence of which forms one of its principal articles. In this sense, Jesus Christ is affirmed to be "Head over all things to the church, which is his body." It is in this collective view of it that we affirm its perpetuity. When the term is employed to denote a particular assembly of Christians, it is invariably accompanied with a specification of the place where it was accustomed to convene, as, for example, the church at Corinth, at Ephesus, or at Rome. Now it is manifest from Scripture, that these two significations of the word differ from each other only as a part differs from a whole, so that when the whole body of believers is intended, it is used in its absolute form; when a particular society is meant, it is joined with a local specification. It is never used in the New Testament, as in modern times, to denote the aggregate of Christian assemblies throughout a province, or a kingdom; nor do we ever read of the church of Achaia, Galatia, &c., but of the churches, in the plural number; the word being constantly applied either to the whole number of the faithful scattered throughout the world, or to some single congregation or society. It is equally obvious that whenever the word church occurs in its absolute form, it comprehends all genuine Christians without exception, and as that church is affirmed to be *his body*, it could not enter into the conception of the inspired writers that there were a class of persons strictly united to Christ, who yet were none of its component parts.

By orthodox Christians it is uniformly maintained that union to Christ is formed by faith, and as the Baptists are distinguished by demanding a profession of it at baptism, they at least are precluded from asserting that rite to have any concern in effecting the spiritual alliance in question. In their judgment at least, since faith precedes the application of water, the only means of union are possessed by the abetters of infant-sprinkling equally with themselves; who are therefore equally of the "body of Christ, and members in particular." But since the Holy Ghost identifies that body with the church, explaining the one by the other ("for his body's sake, which is the church"), it seems impossible to deny that they are fully entitled to be considered, in the catholic sense of the term, as members of the Christian church

And as the universal church is nothing more than the collective body of the faithful, and differs only from a particular assembly of Christians, as the whole from a part, it is equally impossible to deny that a Pedobaptist society is, in the more limited import of the word, a true church.

If we consider the matter in a light somewhat different, we shall be conducted to the same conclusion, and be compelled to confess that Pedobaptist societies are, or at least may be, notwithstanding the practice of infant-sprinkling, true churches. The idea of plurality, it will be admitted, adds nothing to the nature of the object to which it is attached. The idea of a number of men differs nothing in kind from that of a single man, except that it involves a repetition or multiplication of the same idea. But the term church is merely a numerical term, denoting a multitude, or an assembly of men; and for the same reason that a number of men meeting together constitutes an assembly, or *church*,* in the most comprehensive import of the word, so a number of Christians convened for the worship of God constitutes a Christian assembly, or a *church*. Such an assembly will necessarily be modified by the character of the members which compose it; if their sentiments are erroneous, the church will proportionably imbibe a tincture of error; but to affirm, that though it consists of real Christians, a society of such assembled for Christian worship is not a true church, is to attribute to the idea of *plurality* or of *number* the power of changing the nature or essence of the object with which it is united, which involves a contradiction to our clearest perceptions. If we adhere to the dictates of reason or of Scripture when we give the appellation of a church to a particular society of Christians, we shall mingle nothing in our conceptions beyond what enters into our ideas of an individual Christian, with the exception of this circumstance only, that it denotes a number of such individuals actually assembled, or wont to assemble, for the celebration of Divine worship. Though the definition of a church has often been the occasion of much confused disquisition, especially when the term had been applied exclusively to the clergy, the Baptists, I believe, are the only persons who have scrupled to assign that appellation to societies acknowledged to consist of sincere and spiritual worshippers: a notion which, however repugnant to the dictates of candour, or of common sense, is the necessary appendage of the practice, equally absurd, of confining their communion to their own denomination.

Having shown, we trust to the satisfaction of the reader, that Pedobaptism is not an error of such magnitude as to prevent the society which maintains it from being deemed a true church, I proceed to observe, that to repel the members of such a society from communion is the very essence of schism. Schism is a causeless and unnecessary separation from the church of Christ, or from any part of it; and that secession cannot urge the plea of necessity where no concurrence in what is deemed evil, no approbation of error or superstition, is involved in communion. In the case before us, by admitting a Pedobaptist to the Lord's Supper, no sanction whatever is given to infant-sprinkling, no

* Acts xix. 32.—"For the assembly was confused." The original is ἡ ἐκκλησία, the term usually rendered *church*

act of concurrence is involved or implied; nothing is done, or left undone, which would have not been equally so if his attendance were withdrawn. Under such circumstances, the necessity of preserving the purity of worship, or of avoiding an active co-operation in what we deem sinful or erroneous (the only justifiable ground of separation), has no place. The objection to his admission is founded solely on a disapprobation of a particular practice considered, not as it affects us, since no part of our religious practice is influenced by it, but in relation to its intrinsic demerits.

Division among Christians, especially when it proceeds to a breach of communion, is so fraught with scandal, and so utterly repugnant to the genius of the gospel, that the suffrages of the whole Christian world have concurred in regarding it as an evil on no occasion to be incurred, but for the avoidance of a greater—the violation of conscience. Whenever it becomes impossible to continue in a religious community without concurring in practices and sanctioning abuses which the word of God condemns, a secession is justified by the apocalyptic voice, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." On this principle, the conduct of the Reformers in separating from the Roman hierarchy admits of an ample vindication: in consequence of the introduction of superstitious rites and ceremonies, it became impracticable to continue in her communion without partaking of her sins; and for a similar reason the nonconformists seceded from the Church of England, where ceremonies were enforced, and an ecclesiastical polity established, incompatible, as they conceived, with the purity and simplicity of the Christian institute. In each of these cases, the blame of schism did not attach to the separatists, but to that spirit of imposition which rendered such a measure requisite. In each instance, it was an act of self-preservation, rendered unavoidable by the highest necessity, that of declining to concur in practices at which their conscience revolted. But what similarity to this is discernible in the conduct of the advocates of strict communion? They are not engaged in preserving their own liberty, but in an attack on the liberty of others: their object is not to preserve the worship in which they join pure from contamination; but to sit in judgment on the consciences of their brethren, and to deny them the privileges of the visible church on account of a difference of opinion, which is neither imposed on themselves nor deemed fundamental. They propose to build a church, upon the principle of an absolute exclusion of a multitude of societies, which they must either acknowledge to be true churches, or be convicted, as we have seen, of the greatest absurdity, while for a conduct so monstrous and unnatural, they are precluded from the plea of necessity, because no attempt is made by Pedobaptists to modify their worship, or to control the most enlarged exercise of private judgment. Upon the principle for which I am contending, they are not called to renounce their peculiar tenets on the subject of baptism, nor to express their approbation of a contrary practice; but simply not to sever themselves from the body of Christ, nor refuse to unite with his church.

However familiar the spectacle of Christian societies who have no fellowship or intercourse with each other has become, he who consults the New Testament will instantly perceive that nothing more repugnant to the dictates of inspiration, or to the practice of the first and purest age, can be conceived. When we turn our eyes to the primitive times, we behold one church of Christ, and one only, in which, when new assemblies of Christians arose, they were considered, not as multiplying but diffusing it; not as destroying its unity, or impairing its harmony, but being fitly compacted together on the same foundation, as a mere accession to the beauty and grandeur of the whole. The spouse of Christ, like a prolific mother, exulted in her numerous offspring, who were all equally cherished in her bosom, and grew up at her side. As the necessity of departing from these maxims, or of appearing to depart from them at least by forming separate societies, arose entirely from that spirit of ecclesiastical tyranny and superstition which was gradually developed, so a similar measure is justifiable as far as that necessity extends, and no further. In the case of strict communion, it has no place whatever. In that case it is not a defensive but an offensive measure; it is not an assertion of Christian liberty by resisting encroachment, it is itself a violent encroachment on the freedom of others; not an effort to preserve our own worship pure, but to enforce a conformity to our views, in a point acknowledged not essential to salvation. That the unity of the church cannot be maintained upon those principles, that if every error is to be opposed, not by mild remonstrance and scriptural argument, but by making it the pretext of a breach of communion, nothing but a series of animosities and divisions can ensue, the experience of past ages has rendered sufficiently evident. If amid the infinite diversity of opinions, each society deems it necessary to render its own peculiarities the basis of union, as though the design of Christians in forming themselves into a church were, not to exhibit the great principles of the gospel, but to give publicity and effect to party distinctions, all hope of restoring Christian harmony and unanimity must be abandoned. When churches are thus constituted, instead of enlarging the sphere of Christian charity, they become so many hostile confederacies.

If it be once admitted that a body of men associating for Christian worship have a right to enact, as terms of communion, something more than is included in the terms of salvation, the question suggested by St. Paul—"Is Christ divided?" is utterly futile: what he considered as a solecism is reduced to practice, and established by law. How is it possible to attain or preserve unanimity in the absence of an intelligible standard? and when we feel ourselves at liberty to depart from a Divine precedent, and to affect a greater nicety and scrupulosity in the separation of the precious and the vile, than the Searcher of hearts; when we follow the guidance of private partialities and predilections, without pretending to regulate our conduct by the pattern of our great Master; who is at a loss to perceive the absolute impossibility of preserving "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace?" Of what is essential to salvation it is not difficult to judge: the quiet of the conscience requires that the information on this subject should be clear and precise;

whatever is beyond is involved in comparative obscurity, and subject to doubtful disputation.

There are certain propositions which produce on a mind free from prejudice such instantaneous conviction as scarcely to admit of formal proof. Of this nature is the following position, that it is presumptuous to aspire to a greater purity and strictness in selecting the materials of a church than are observed by its Divine Founder; and those whom he forms and actuates by his Spirit, and admits to communion with himself, are sufficiently qualified for the communion of mortals. What can be alleged in contradiction to a truth so indubitable and so obvious? Nothing but a futile distinction (futile in relation to the present subject) between the moral and the positive parts of Christianity. We are told, again and again, that the Lord's Supper is a positive and arbitrary institution, in consequence of which, the right to it is not to be judged of by moral considerations and general reasonings, but by express prescription and command.

Willing to meet objectors on their own ground, we request them to point us to the passage in the code of inspiration where unbaptized Christians are forbidden to participate; and all the answer we receive consists merely of those inferences and arguments from analogy against which they protest: so that our opponents, unsupported by the letter of Scripture, are obliged to have recourse to general reasoning, not less than ourselves, however lame and defective that reasoning may be.

When we urge them with the fact that all genuine Christians are received by Christ, and that his conduct in this instance is proposed as a pattern for our imitation, they are compelled to shift their ground; and although it is evident to every one who reflects that we mean to assert the obligation of adhering to that example only as far as it is known, they adduce the instance of immoral professors, who, though received, as they contend, by Christ, are justly rejected by the church. But how, we ask, are we to ascertain the fact that such persons are accepted of Christ, till they give proof of their repentance? Is it precisely the same thing to neglect a known rule of action, as to cease to follow it, when it is involved in hopeless obscurity? Admitting, for argument's sake, that disorderly livers have uninterrupted union with the Saviour, it is impossible that we should know it while they continue impenitent, and therefore, on such occasions, it ceases to be a rule. But in rejecting Pedobaptists in the mass, they reject a numerous class of Christians whom they know and acknowledge to be the temples of the Holy Ghost. If the two cases are parallel, we acknowledge the justice of the conclusion; if not, what more futile and absurd? Let it be remembered, however, that all this quibbling and tergiversation are employed to get rid of an apostolic canon, and that they bear upon our principles in no other sense than as they tend to nullify or impair the force of an inspired maxim. If we are in error, we deem it no small felicity to err in such company.

Before I close this section, I must be permitted to remark an inconsistency in the conduct of our opponents connected with this part of the subject which has often excited my surprise. Disclaiming, as they

do, all communion with Pedobaptists, and refusing to acknowledge them as a legitimate part of the Christian church, we should naturally expect they would shun every approach to such a recognition of them with peculiar care in devotional exercises, in solemn addresses to the Deity. Nothing, on the contrary, is more common than the interchange of religious services between Baptists and Independents, in which the Pedobaptist minister is solemnly recommended to the Supreme Being as the pastor of the church, and his blessing earnestly implored on the relation they stand in to each other; nor is it unusual for a Baptist to officiate at the ordination of an Independent minister, by delivering a charge, or inculcating the duties of the people, in a discourse appropriated to the occasion. They feel no objection to have communion with Pedobaptists in prayer and praise, the most solemn of all acts of worship, even on an occasion immediately connected with the recognition of a religious society; but no sooner does the idea of the Eucharist occur, than it operates like a spell, and all this language is changed, and these sentiments vanish. It is surely amusing to behold a person solemnly inculcating the reciprocal duties of a relation which, on his principles, has no existence; and interceding expressly in behalf of a pastor and a church, when, if we credit his representations at other times, that church is illegitimate, and the title of pastor consequently a mere usurpation. Although it must be acknowledged that the approach of Pedobaptists to the sacred table is, on their principles, a presumptuous intrusion, it is seldom that the advocates of strict communion feel any scruple in attempting, by devotional exercises, to prepare the mind for the right performance of what they are accustomed to stigmatize as radically wrong. For my part, I am utterly at a loss to reconcile these discrepancies. Is it that they consider less attention to truth, a less exact correspondence between the language and the sentiments, requisite in addressing the Deity than in discoursing with their fellow-mortals? Or is it not more candid to suppose that devotion elevates them to a higher region, where they breathe a freer air, and look down upon the petty subtleties of a thorny, disputatious theology with a just and sovereign contempt?

SECTION IV.

The Exclusion of Pedobaptists from the Lord's Table considered as a Punishment.

The refusal of the Eucharist to a professor of Christianity can be justified only on the ground of his supposed criminality,—of his embracing heretical sentiments, or living a vicious life. As the sentence of exclusion is the severest the church can inflict, and no punishment just but in proportion to the degree of preceding delinquency, it follows of course that he who incurs the total privation of church privileges must be considered eminently in the light of an offender. When the incestuous person was separated from the church at Corinth, it was

regarded by St. Paul as a *punishment*, and that of no ordinary magnitude :—"Sufficient," said he, "is this punishment, which was inflicted of many." Nor is there any difference with respect to the present inquiry, between the refusal of a candidate and the expulsion of a member; since nothing will justify the former of these measures which might not be equally alleged in vindication of the latter. Both amount to a declaration of the parties being unworthy to communicate. The language held by our opponents is sufficiently decisive on this head :—"It is not every one," says Mr. Booth, "that is received of Jesus Christ who is entitled to communion at his table; but such, and such only, as revere his authority, submit to his ordinances, and obey the laws of his house."* Hence, to be consistent with themselves, they must impute to Pedobaptists universally a degree of delinquency equal to that which attaches to the most flagrant breaches of immorality; and deem them equally guilty in the sight of God with those unjust persons, idolaters, revellers, and extortioners, who are declared incapable of entering into the kingdom of heaven. For if the guilt imputed in this instance is acknowledged to be of a totally different order from that which belongs to the openly vicious and profane, how come they to be included in the same sentence? and where is the equity of animadverting upon unequal faults with equal severity?

To be consistent, also, they must invariably refuse to tolerate every species of imperfection in their members, which in their judgment is equally criminal with the Pedobaptist error: but how far they are from maintaining this impartiality is too obvious to admit of a question. In churches whose discipline is the most rigid, it will not be denied that many are tolerated who are chargeable with conduct more offensive in the sight of God than a misconception of the nature of a positive institute; nor will they assert that a Brainerd, a Doddridge, or a Leighton had more to answer for at the supreme tribunal on the score of infant baptism, than the most doubtful of those imperfect Christians whom they retain without scruple in their communion. Let them remember, too, that this reasoning proceeds not on the principle of the innocence of error in general, or of infant-sprinkling in particular: but, on the contrary, that it takes for granted that some degree of blame attaches to a neglect, though involuntary, of a positive precept; we wish only to be informed on what principle of equity it is proposed in the infliction of ecclesiastical censures, to equalize things which are not equal.

From those injunctions of St. Paul which have already been distinctly noticed, where he enforces the duty of reciprocal toleration, we find him insisting on certain circumstances adapted to diminish the moral estimate of the errors in question, and to show that they involved a very inconsiderable portion of blame, compared to that which the zealots, on either side, were disposed to impute. Such is the statement of their not being fundamental, of the possibility of their being held with a pure conscience, and the certainty that both parties were equally

* Apology, p. 107.

comprehended within the terms of salvation. In thus attempting to form an estimate of the magnitude of the mistakes and misconceptions of our fellow-christians in a moral view, for the purpose of regulating our treatment of them, we are justified by the highest authority; and the only rational inquiry seems to be, whether infant baptism is really more criminal than those acknowledged imperfections which are allowed to be proper objects of Christian forbearance. If it be affirmed that it is, we request our opponents to reconcile this assertion with the high encomiums they are wont to bestow on Pedobaptists, many of whom they feel no hesitation in classing, on other occasions, with the most eminent saints upon earth. That they are perfectly exempt from blame we are not contending; but this strange combination of vice and virtue in the same persons, by which they are at once justly excluded from the church as *criminal* and extolled as saints, is perfectly incomprehensible. The advocates of this doctrine attempt to conceal its deformity, by employing an attenuated and ambiguous phraseology, and instead of speaking of Pedobaptists in the terms their system demands, are fond of applying the epithets irregular, disorderly, &c. to their conduct. Still the question returns—Is this imputed irregularity innocent or criminal? If the former, why punish it at all? If the latter, surely the punishment should be proportioned to the guilt; and if it exceed the measure awarded to offences equally aggravated, we must either pronounce it unjust, or confound the distinction of right and wrong. But if the forfeiture of all the privileges attached to Christian society is incurred merely by infant baptism, while numerous imperfections, both in sentiment and practice, are tolerated in the same church, it cannot be denied that the former is treated with more severity than the latter. If it be more criminal, such treatment is just; but if a Doddridge and a Leighton were not, even in the judgment of our opponents, necessarily more criminal in the sight of God than the most imperfect of those whom they retain in their communion, it is neither just in itself, nor upon their own principles.

If we consider the matter in another light, the measure under consideration will appear equally incapable of vindication. As it is unquestionably of the nature of *punishment*, so the infliction of every species of punishment is out of place which has no tendency to reform the offender, or to benefit others by his example, which are its only legitimate ends. Whatever is besides these purposes is a useless waste of suffering, equally condemned by the dictates of reason and religion. The application of this principle to the case before us is extremely obvious.

I am far from thinking lightly of the spiritual power with which Christ has armed his church. It is a high and mysterious one, which has no parallel on earth. Nothing in the order of means is equally adapted to awaken compunction in the guilty, with spiritual censures impartially administered. The sentence of excommunication in particular, harmonizing with the dictates of conscience, and re-echoed by her voice, is truly terrible; it is the voice of God, speaking through its legitimate organ, which he who despises or neglects ranks with

"heathen men and publicans," joins the synagogue of Satan, and takes his lot with an unbelieving world, doomed to perdition. Excommunication is a sword which, strong in its apparent weakness, and the sharper and more efficacious for being divested of all sensible and exterior envelopements, lights immediately on the spirit, and inflicts a wound which no balm can cure, no ointment can mollify, but which must continue to ulcerate and burn, till healed by the blood of atonement, applied by penitence and prayer. In no instance is that axiom more fully verified, "The weakness of God is stronger than men, and the foolishness of God is wiser than men," than in the discipline of his church. By encumbering it with foreign aid, they have robbed it of its real strength; by calling in the aid of temporal pains and penalties, they have removed it from the spirit to the flesh, from its contact with eternity to unite it to secular interests; and, as the corruption of the best things is the worst, have rendered it the scandal and reproach of our holy religion.

While it retains its character as a spiritual ordinance, it is the chief bulwark against the disorders which threaten to overturn religion, the very nerve of virtue, and, next to the preaching of the Cross, the principal antidote to the "corruptions that are in the world through lust." Discipline in a church occupies the place of laws in a state; and as a kingdom, however excellent its constitution, will inevitably sink into a state of extreme wretchedness, in which laws are either not enacted or not duly administered; so a church which pays no attention to discipline will either fall into confusion, or into a state so much worse that little or nothing will remain worth regulating. The right of inflicting censures, and of proceeding in extreme cases to excommunication, is an essential branch of that power with which the church is endowed, and bears the same relation to discipline that the administration of criminal justice bears to the general principles of government. When this right is exerted in upholding the "faith once delivered to the saints," or enforcing a conscientious regard to the laws of Christ, it maintains its proper place, and is highly beneficial. Its cognizance of doctrine is justified by apostolic authority; "a heretic, after two or three admonitions, reject:" nor is it to any purpose to urge the difference between ancient heretics and modern, or that to pretend to distinguish truth from error is a practical assumption of infallibility. While the truth of the gospel remains, a fundamental contradiction to it is possible: and the difficulty of determining what is so must be exactly proportioned to the difficulty of ascertaining the import of revelation, which he who affirms to be insurmountable ascribes to it such an obscurity as must defeat its primary purpose.

He who contends that no agreement in doctrine is essential to communion must, if he understands himself, either mean to assert that Christianity contains no fundamental truths, or that it is not necessary that a member of a church should be a Christian. The first of these positions sets aside the necessity of faith altogether; the last is a contradiction in terms. For these reasons, it is required that the operation of discipline should extend to speculative errors, no less than to practical

enormities. But since it is not pretended that Pedobaptists are heretics, it is evident that they are not subject to the cognizance of the church under that character. As they differ from us merely in the interpretation of a particular precept, while they avow the same deference to the legislator, the proper antidote to their error is calm, dispassionate argument, not the exercise of power. Let us present the evidence on which our practice is grounded to the greatest advantage, to which the display of a conciliating spirit will contribute more than a little: but to proceed with a high hand, and attempt to terminate the dispute by authority, involves an utter misconception of the true nature and object of discipline, which is never to decide what is doubtful, to elucidate what is obscure, but to promulgate the sentence which the immutable laws of Christ have provided, with the design, in the first place, of exciting compunction in the breast of the offender, and next of profiting others by his example. The solemn decision of a Christian assembly, that an individual has forfeited his right to spiritual privileges, and is henceforth consigned to the kingdom of Satan, is an awful proceeding, only inferior in terror to the sentence of the last day.

But what is it which renders it so formidable? It is its accordance with the moral nature of man, its harmony with the dictates of conscience, which gives it all its force. When, on the contrary, the pious inquirer is satisfied with his own conduct, viewing it with approbation and complacency; when he is fortified, as in the present instance, by the example of a great majority of the Christian world, who are ready to receive him with open arms, and to applaud him for the very practice which has provoked it, how vain is it to expect that his exclusion from a particular church will operate a change! When he learns, too, that his supposed error is not pretended to be fatal, but such as may be held with a good conscience, and with faith unfeigned, and is actually held by some of the best of men, it is easy to foresee what sentiments he will feel towards the authors of such a measure, and how little he will be prepared to examine impartially the evidence of that particular opinion which has occasioned it. Such a proceeding, not having the remotest tendency to inform or to alarm the conscience, is ineffectual to every purpose of discipline; and as it professedly comprises nothing of the nature of argument, no light can be derived from it, towards the elucidation of a controverted question. It interposes by authority, instead of reason, where authority can avail nothing, and reason is all in all: and while it is contemptible as an instrument employed to compel unanimity, its power of exciting prejudice and disgust is unrivalled. Such are the mischiefs resulting from confounding together the provinces of discipline and of argument; and since the practice which we have ventured to oppose, if it has any meaning, is intended to operate as a punishment, without answering one of the ends for which it is inflicted, it is high time it was consigned to oblivion.

There is another consideration, sufficiently related to the part of the subject before us to justify my introducing it here, as I would wish to avoid the unnecessary multiplication of divisions. Whatever criminality attaches to the practice of free communion must entirely consist in

sanctioning the improper conduct of the parties with whom we unite; and if it be wrong to join with Pedobaptists at the Lord's table, it must be still more so in them to celebrate it. When an action allowed in itself to be innocent or commendable becomes improper as performed in conjunction with another, that impropriety must result solely from the moral incompetence to that action of the party associated. Thus, in the instance before us, it must be assumed that Pedobaptists are *morally culpable* in approaching the sacred symbols, or the attempt to criminate us for *sanctioning* them in that practice would be ridiculous. As it is allowed that every baptized believer not only may partake, but ought to partake, of that spiritual repast, his uniting with Pedobaptists on that occasion is liable to objection on no other ground than that it may be considered as intimating his approbation of *their* conduct in that particular. Upon the principles of our opponents, their approach is not only sinful, but sinful to such a degree as to communicate a moral taint to what, in other circumstances, would be deemed an act of obedience. Here the first question that arises is,—Are the advocates of infant baptism criminal in approaching the Lord's table?

Be it remembered, that our controversy with them respects the ordinance of baptism only, which we suppose them to have misconceived and that it has no relation to the only remaining positive institute Believing, as many of them unquestionably do, that they are as truly baptized as ourselves, and there being no controversy between us on the subject of the Eucharist, it is impossible for them, even on the principles of our opponents, to entertain the least scruple respecting the obligation of attending to that ordinance. Admitting it possible for them to believe what they uniformly and invariably profess, they cannot fail of being fully convinced that it is their duty to communicate. Under these circumstances, ought they to communicate, or ought they not? If we answer in the negative, we must affirm that men ought not to pursue that course which, after the most mature deliberation, the unhesitating dictates of conscience suggest; which would go to obliterate and annul the only immediate rule of human action. Nor can it be objected with truth that the tendency of this reasoning is to destroy the absolute difference between right and wrong, by referring all to conscience. That apart from human judgments there is an intrinsic moral difference in actions we freely admit, and hence results the previous obligation of informing the mind by a diligent attention to the dictates of reason and religion, and of delaying to act till we have sufficient light; but in entire consistence with this, we affirm that where there is no hesitation the criterion of *immediate* duty is the suggestion of conscience, whatever guilt may have been previously incurred by the neglect of serious and impartial inquiry. That this, under the modifications already specified, is the only criterion is sufficiently evident from the impossibility of conceiving any other. If it lead (as it easily may from the neglect of the previous inquiry already mentioned) to a deviation from absolute rectitude, we must not concur in the action in which such deviation is involved.

To apply these principles to the case before us. Whatever blame

we may be disposed to attribute to the abetters of infant baptism on the score of previous inattention or prejudice, as there is nothing in their principles to cause them to hesitate respecting the obligation of the Eucharist, it is unquestionably their *immediate* duty to celebrate it; they would be guilty of a deliberate and wilful offence were they to neglect it. And as it is *their* duty to act thus, in compliance with the dictates of conscience, we cannot be guilty of sanctioning what is evil in them by the approbation implied in joint participation. As far as *they* are concerned the case seems clear, and no sanction is given to criminal conduct. It remains to be considered only how the action is situated with respect to ourselves; and here the decision is still more easy, for the action to which we are invited is not only consistent with rectitude, but would be allowed by all parties to be an instance of obedience, but for the concurrence of Pedobaptists. Thus much may suffice in answer to the first question, respecting the supposed criminality of the act of communion as performed by the advocates of infant baptism,—a criminality which must be assumed as the sole basis of the charges adduced against the practice we are defending.

When we reflect that the whole of our opponents' reasoning turns upon the disqualification of Pedobaptists for the Lord's Supper, it is surprising that we rarely if ever find them contemplate the subject in that light, or advert to the criminality of breaking down that sacred enclosure. The subordinate agents are severely censured, the principal offenders scarcely noticed, and if my reader be disposed to gratify his curiosity by making a collection of all the uncandid strictures which have been passed upon the advocates of pedobaptism, it is more than probable the charge of profaning the Lord's Supper would not be found among the number. Yet this is the *original* sin; this the epidemic evil, as widely diffused as the existence of Pedobaptist communities: and if it be of such a nature as to attach a portion of guilt to whatever comes into contact with it, it must, considering its extensive prevalence, be one of the most crying enormities. It is an evil which has spread much wider than the sacrifice of the mass: it is a pollution which (with the exception of one sect only) attaches to all flesh, and is unblushingly avowed by the professors of Christianity in every part of the universe. And, what is most surprising, the only persons who have discovered it, instead of lifting up their voice, maintain a profound silence; and, while they are sufficiently liberal in their censures on the popular error respecting baptism, are not heard to breathe a murmur against this erroneous abuse. In truth, they are so little impressed with it that they decline urging it even where the mention of it would seem unavoidable. When they are rebuking us for joining with our Pedobaptist brethren in partaking of a sacrament for which they are supposed to want the due qualifications, it is not *their* presumption in approaching on which they insist, as might be reasonably expected; on that subject they are silent, while they vehemently inveigh against the imaginary countenance we afford to the neglect of baptism. Thus they persist in construing our conduct, not into an approval of that act of communion in which we are engaged, but into a tacit submission of the validity of

infant baptism, against which we are known to remonstrate. In short, they are disposed to attack our practice in any point rather than in that in which, if we are wrong, it is alone vulnerable, that of its being an expression of our approbation of Pedobaptists celebrating the Eucharist. In the same spirit, when they have once procured the exclusion of the obnoxious party from their assemblies, they are completely satisfied; their communion elsewhere gives them no concern, though it must be allowed, on the supposition of the pretended disqualification, that the evil remains in its full force. Nor are they ever known to remonstrate with them on this irregularity during its continuance; nor, should they afterward become converts to our doctrine, to recall it to their attention with a view to excite compunction and remorse; so that this is perhaps the only sin for which men are never called to repentance, and of which no man has been known to repent. When our Lord dismissed the woman taken in adultery, though he did not proceed to judge her, he solemnly charged her to *sin no more*: the advocates for strict communion, when they dismiss Pedobaptists, give them no such charge; their language seems to be,—"Go, sin by yourselves, and we are satisfied."

The inference I would deduce from these remarkable facts is, that they possess an internal conviction that the class of Christians whom they proscribe would be guilty of a great impropriety in declining to communicate in the sacramental elements; and that the union of Baptists with them in that solemnity, so far from being liable to the imputation of "partaking in other men's sins," is not only lawful, but commendable.

SECTION V.

On the Impossibility of reducing the Practice of Strict Communion to any general Principle.

When a particular branch of conduct is so circumstanced as to be incapable of being deduced from some general rule, or of being resolved into some comprehensive principle founded on reason or revelation, we may be perfectly assured it is not obligatory. Whatever is matter of duty is a part of some *whole*, the relation of which is susceptible of proof, either by the express decision of Scripture, or by general reasoning; and a point of practice perfectly insulated and disjointed from the general system of duties, whatever support it may derive from prejudice, custom, or caprice, can never be satisfactorily vindicated. From want of attention to this axiom, both the world and the church have, in different periods, been overrun with innumerable forms of superstition and folly; to which the only effectual antidote is an appeal to principles. Unless I am much mistaken, the question under discussion will afford a striking exemplification of the justness of this remark. If it be found impossible to fix a medium between the toleration of all opinions in religion and the restriction of it to errors *not fundamental*,

the practice of exclusive communion must be abandoned, because it is neither more nor less than an attempt to establish such a medium. By errors *not fundamental*, I mean such as are admitted to consist with a state of grace and salvation; such as are not supposed to prevent their abetters from being accepted of God. With such as contend for the indiscriminate admission of all doctrines, on the one hand, or with the abetters of rigid uniformity, who allow no latitude of sentiment, on the other, we have no concern; since we concur with our opponents in deprecating both these extremes; and while we are tenacious of the "truth as it is in Jesus," we both admit that some indulgence to the mistakes and imperfections of the truly pious is due, from a regard to the dictates of inspiration and the nature of man. The only subject of controversy is, how far that forbearance is to be extended: we assert, to every diversity of judgment not incompatible with salvation; they contend, that a difference of opinion on baptism is an excepted case. If the word of God had clearly and unequivocally made this exception, we should feel ourselves bound to admit it, upon the same principle on which we maintain the infallible certainty of revelation; but when we press for this decision, and request to be directed to the part of Scripture which for ever prohibits unbaptized persons from approaching the sacrament, in the same manner as the Jews were prohibited from celebrating the passover who had not submitted to circumcision, we meet with no reply but precarious inferences and general reasoning.

However plausible their mode of arguing may appear, the impartial reader will easily perceive it fails in the main point, which is, to establish that *specific difference* between the case they except out of their list of tolerated errors, and those which they admit, which shall justify this opposite treatment. Thus, when they ask whether God has not "commanded baptism; whether it is not the believer's duty to be found in it;"* it is manifest that the same reasons might be urged against bearing with any imperfection in our fellow-christian whatever; for which of these, we ask, is not inconsistent with some command, and a violation, in a greater or less degree, of some duty? with this difference, indeed, that many of the imperfections which Christian churches are necessitated to bear with are seated in the will, while the case before us involves merely an unintentional mistake. "It is not every one," says Mr. Booth, "that is received of Jesus Christ who is entitled to communion at his table; but such, and only such, as revere his authority, submit to his ordinances, and obey the laws of his house" This is the most formal attempt which that writer has made to specify the difference between the case of the abetters of infant baptism and others; for which reason the reader will excuse my directing his attention to it for a few moments. We are indebted to him, in the first place, for a new discovery in theology. We should not have suspected, but for his assertion, that there could be a description of persons whom Christ has received, who neither revere his authority, submit to his ordinances, nor obey his laws. How Mr. Booth acquired this informa-

* Booth's Apology, p. 128.

tion we know not; but certainly in our Saviour's time it was otherwise. "Then are ye my disciples," said he, "if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you." I congratulate the public on the prudence evinced by the venerable author in not publishing the names of these highly privileged individuals, who have proved their title to heaven to his satisfaction, without reverence, submission, or obedience; wishing his example had been imitated, in this particular, by the authors of the wonderful conversions of malefactors, many of whom, I fear, belong to this new sect.

This singular description, however, I scarcely need remind the reader, is designed to characterize Baptists in opposition to Pedobaptists; and were it not the production of a man whom I highly revere, I should comment upon it with the severity it deserves. Suffice it to remark, that to mistake the meaning of a statute is one thing, not to reverence the legislator another; that he cannot submit with a good conscience to an ordinance who is not apprized of its existence; and that a blind obedience, even to Divine laws, would be far from constituting a reasonable service. Every conscientious adherent to infant baptism reveres the authority of Christ not less than a Baptist, and is distinguished by a spirit of submission and obedience to every known part of his will; and as this is all to which a Baptist can pretend, and far more than many who, without scruple, are tolerated in our churches can boast, we are as far as ever from ascertaining the *specific difference* between the case of the Pedobaptist, and other instances of error supposed to be entitled to indulgence. In spite of Mr. Booth's marvellous definition, reverence, submission, and obedience are such essential features in the character of a Christian, that he who was judged to be destitute of them, in their substance and reality, would instantly forfeit that character; while to possess them in perfection is among the brightest acquisitions of eternity. It should be remembered, too, that the general principles of morality are not less the laws of Christ than positive rites, and, if we credit prophets and apostles, much to be preferred in comparison; so that it must be acknowledged that he who is deficient in attention to these, while he is more exemplary in discharging the former than a baptized Christian (a very frequent case), stands higher in the scale of obedience. So equivocal is the line of separation here attempted.

When the necessity of tolerating imperfection is once admitted, there remains no point at which it can consistently stop, till it is extended to every gradation of error, the habitual maintenance of which is compatible with a state of salvation. The reason is, that it is absolutely impossible to define that *species* of error so situated as not to preclude its possessor from Divine acceptance, although it forfeits his title to the full exercise of Christian charity. The Baptists, who contend for confining the Lord's Supper to themselves, imagine they have found such an error in the practice of initiating infants into the Christian church. But it is observable that they can reduce it to no *class*, nor define it by any *general idea;* and when we urge them with the apostolic injunction, to bear with each other's infirmities, they have nothing to reply, but

merely that St. Paul is not speaking of baptism, which is true, because one thing is not another; but it behooves them to show that the principle he establishes does not *include* this case, and here they are silent.

If we impartially examine the reasons on which we rest the toleration of any supposed error, we shall find they invariably coincide with the idea of its *not being fundamental*. If it be alleged, for example, that the error in question relates to a subject less clearly revealed than some others, what is this but to insinuate the ease with which an honest inquirer may mistake respecting it? If the little practical influence it is likely to exert is alleged as a plea for forbearance, the force of such a remark rests entirely on the assumption of an indissoluble connexion between a state of salvation and a certain character, which the opinion in question is supposed not to destroy. If we allege the example of eminently pious men who have embraced it, we infer from analogy the actual safety of the person by whom it is held; and, in short, it is impossible to construct an argument for the exercise of mutual forbearance, but what proceeds upon this principle; a principle which pervades the reasoning of our opponents on every other occasion, except this of strict communion, which they make an insulated case, capriciously exempting it from the arbitration of all the general rules of Scripture, as well as from the maxims to which, in all other instances, they are attached.

Reluctant as I feel to trespass on the patience of the reader, by unnecessarily prolonging the discussion, I am anxious, if possible, to set the present argument in a still stronger light. I observe, therefore, that if it be contended that a certain opinion is so obnoxious as to justify the exclusion of its abetters from the privilege of Christian fellowship, it must be either on account of its involving a contradiction to the saving truth of the gospel, or on account of its injurious effects on the character. As those of our brethren to whom this reasoning is addressed positively disclaim considering infant baptism in the former light, they will not attempt to vindicate the exclusion of Pedobaptists on that ground. In vindication of such a measure, they must allege the injurious effects it produces on the character of its abetters. Here however, they have precluded themselves from the possibility of urging that the injury sustained is *fatal*, by the previous concession that it does not involve a contradiction to saving truth. Could they, without cancelling that concession, urge the *fatal* nature of the influence in question, they would present an object to the mind sufficiently precise and determinate; an object which may be easily conceived and accurately defined. But as things are now situated, they can, at most, only insist on such a kind and degree of deteriorating effect as is consistent with the spiritual safety of the party concerned; and as they are among the first to contend that every species of error is productive of injurious effects, it is incumbent upon them to point out some consequences worse in their kind, or more aggravated in degree, resulting from this particular *error*, than what may be fairly ascribed to the worst of those erroneous or defective views which they are accustomed to tolerate. These injurious consequences must also occupy an intermediate place

between two extremes; they must, on the one hand, be decidedly more serious than can be supposed to result from the most crude, undigested, or discordant views tolerated in regular Baptist churches, yet not of such a nature, on the other, as to involve the danger of eternal perdition. Let them specify, if it be in their power, that ill influence on the character which is the natural consequence of the tenet of infant-sprinkling, considered *per se*, or independent of adventitious circumstances, and the operation of accidental causes, which justifies a treatment of its patrons so different from what is given to the abetters of other errors. This malignant influence must, I repeat it, be the natural or necessary product of the practice of pedobaptism; because the simple avowal of this is deemed sufficient to incur the forfeiture of church privileges, without further time or inquiry. However vehemently the supporters of such a measure may declaim against it, or however triumphantly expose the principles on which it is founded, they have done nothing towards accomplishing their object—the vindication of strict communion, since the same mode of proceeding might be adopted towards any other misconception, or erroneous opinion; and if it may be forcibly expelled as soon as it is confuted, there is an end to toleration. Toleration has no place but in the presence of acknowledged imperfection. It is absolutely necessary for them, as they would vindicate their conduct to the satisfaction of reasonable men, to prove that some specific deteriorating effect results from the practice of infant baptism, distinct from the malignant influence of error in general, and of those imperfections in particular which are not inconsistent with salvation.

Though the opposition between truth and error is equal in all cases, and the former always susceptible of proof, as well as the latter of confutation, all error is not opposed to the *same* truths; and hence arises a distinction between such erroneous and imperfect views of religion as, however they may in their remoter consequences impair, do not contradict the gospel testimony, and such as do. We lay this distinction as the basis of that forbearance towards the mistakes and imperfections of good men for which we plead; and, as the case of our Pedobaptist brethren is clearly comprehended within that distinction, feel no scruple in admitting them to Christian fellowship. We are attached to that distinction because it is both scriptural and intelligible; while the hypothesis of the strict Baptists, as they style themselves, is so replete with perplexity and confusion, that, for my part, I absolutely despair of comprehending it. It proceeds upon the supposition of a certain medium between two extremes, which they have not even attempted to fix; and as the necessary consequence of this, their reasoning, if we choose to term it such, floats and undulates in such a manner, that it is extremely difficult to grasp it. On the pernicious influence of error in general we entertain no doubt, but we demand, again and again, to have that precise injurious effect of infant-sprinkling pointed out and evinced, which is more to be deprecated than the probable result of those acknowledged imperfections to which they extend their indulgence. This must surely be deemed a reasonable requisition, though it is one with which they have not hitherto thought fit to comply.

The operation of speculative error on the mind is one of the profoundest secrets in nature; and to determine the precise quantity of evil resulting from it in any given case (except the single one of its involving a denial of fundamental truth) transcends the capacity of human nature. We must, in order to form a correct judgment, be not only perfectly acquainted with the nature and tendency of the error in question, but also with the portion of attention it occupies, as well as the degree of zeal and attachment with which it is embraced. We must determine the force of the counteracting principles, and how far it bears an affinity to the predominant failings of him who maintains it; how far it coalesces with the weaker parts of his moral constitution. These particulars, however, it is next to impossible to explore when the inquiry respects ourselves; how much more to establish a scale which shall mark by just gradations the malignant influence of erroneous conceptions on others! On the supposition of a formal denial of saving, essential truth we feel no difficulty; we may determine without hesitation, on the testimony of God, that it incurs a forfeiture of the blessings of the new and everlasting covenant, among which the communion of saints holds a distinguished place. But such a supposition is foreign to the present inquiry.

Instead of losing ourselves in a labyrinth of metaphysical subtleties our only safe guide is an appeal to facts; and here we find from experience that the sentiments of the Pedobaptist may consist with the highest attainments of piety exhibited in modern times, with the most varied and elevated forms of moral grandeur, without impairing the zeal of missionaries, without impeding the march of confessors to their prisons, or of martyrs to the flames. We are willing to acknowledge these tenets have produced much mischief in communities and nations who have confounded baptism with regeneration; but the mere belief of the title of infants to that ordinance is a misconception respecting a positive institute much less injurious than if it affected the vital parts of Christianity. But be it what it may, we contend that it is impossible, without a total disregard of truth and decency, to assert that it is *intrinsically* and *essentially* more pernicious in its effects than the numerous errors and imperfections which the advocates of strict communion feel no scruple in tolerating in the best organized churches. It is but justice to add that few or none have attempted to prove that it is so; but have satisfied themselves with a certain vague and loose declamation, better adapted to inflame prejudice than to produce light or conviction.

In the government of the church there is a choice of three modes of procedure, each consistent with itself, though not equally compatible with the dictates of reason or Scripture. We may either open the doors to persons of all sentiments and persuasions who maintain the messiahship of Christ; or insist upon an absolute uniformity of belief; or limit the necessity of agreement to articles deemed fundamental, leaving subordinate points to the exercise of private judgment. The strict Baptists have feigned to themselves a fourth, of which it is not less difficult to form a clear and consistent conception, than of a fourth

dimension. They have pursued the clew by which other inquirers have been conducted till they arrived at a certain point, when they refused to proceed a step farther, without being able to assign a single reason for stopping which would not equally prove they had already proceeded too far. They have attempted an incongruous mixture of liberal principles with a particular act of intolerance; and these, like the iron and clay in the feet of Nebuchadnezzar's image, will not mix. Hence all that want of coherence and system in their mode of reasoning, which might be expected in a defence, not of a theory so properly, as of a capricious sally of prejudice.

Before I close this part of the subject I must just remark the sensible chagrin which the venerable Booth betrays at our insisting on the distinction between fundamentals and non-fundamentals in religion, and the singular manner in which he attempts to evade its force. After observing that we are wont in defence of our practice to plead that the points at issue are not fundamental—"Not fundamental!" he indignantly exclaims, "not essential! But in what sense is submission to baptism not essential? To our justifying righteousness, our acceptance with God, or our interest in his favour? So is the Lord's Supper, and so is *every part of our obedience.* They (the friends of open communion) will readily allow that an interest in the Divine favour is not obtained by miserable sinners, but granted by the eternal Sovereign; and that acceptance with the high and holy God is not on conditions performed by us, but in consideration of the vicarious obedience and propitiary sufferings of the great Emanuel."

"To the pure all things are pure." In the mind of Mr. Booth nothing was associated with this language, I am persuaded, but impressions of piety and devotion; though its unguarded texture and ambiguous tendency are too manifest. For my own part, I am at a loss to put any other construction upon it than this; either that faith and repentance are in no respect conditions of salvation, or that adult baptism is of equal necessity and importance. When it is asked, What is essential to salvation? the gospel constitution is presupposed, the great facts in Christianity assumed; and the true import of the inquiry is, What is essential to a personal interest in the blessings secured by the former, in the felicity of which the latter are the basis? in which light, to reply, The atonement and righteousness of Christ, is egregious trifling, because, being things *out of ourselves*, though the only preliminary basis of human hope, it is absurd to confound them with the characteristic difference between such as are saved and such as perish. When, in like manner, an inquiry arises, What is fundamental in religion? as we must be supposed by religion to intend a system of doctrines to be believed and of duties to be performed, to direct us to the vicarious obedience of Christ, not as a necessary object of belief, but as a transaction absolute and complete in itself and to pass over in silence the inherent distinction of character, the faith with its renovating influence to which the promise of life is attached, is, to speak in the mildest terms, to reply in a manner quite irrelevant; and when to this is joined even by implication a denial of the existence of such a distinction, we

are conducted to the brink of a precipice. The denial of this is the very core of antinomianism, to which it is painful to see so able a writer and so excellent a man as Mr. Booth make the slightest approach. We would seriously ask whether it be intended to deny that the belief of any doctrines, or the infusion of any principles or dispositions whatever, is essential to future happiness; if this be intended, it supersedes the use and necessity of every branch of internal religion. If it is not, we ask, Are correct views on the subject of baptism to be classed among those doctrines?

Had we been contending for an indulgence towards such as are convinced of the obligation of believers' baptism, but refuse to act up to their convictions and shrink from the Cross, some parts of the expostulation we have quoted might be considered as pertinent; but to attempt to explain away a distinction the most important in theology, the only centre of harmony, the only basis of peace and concord, and the grand bulwark opposed to the sophistry of the Church of Rome, is an humiliating instance of the temerity and imprudence incident to the best of men. The Jesuit Twiss, in that controversy with the Protestants which gave occasion to the inimitable defence of their principles by the immortal Chillingworth, betrayed the same impatience with our author at this distinction, though in perfect consistence with the doctrines of a church which pretends by an appeal to an infallible tribunal to decide every controversy and to preclude every doubt.

Nothing but an absolute despair of giving a satisfactory reply to the arguments drawn from this quarter could have tempted Mr. Booth to quarrel with a distinction so justly dear to all Protestants; and it is no small presumption of the justness of our sentiments, that the attempt to refute them is found to require that subversion of the most received axioms in theology, together with the strange paradox, that while much more than we suppose is necessary to communion, nothing is essential to salvation. In consideration, however, of the embarrassment of our opponents, we feel it easy to overlook the effusions of their discontent; but as it is not usual to consult the enemy on the choice of weapons, we shall continue to employ such as we find most efficacious, though they may not be the most pleasant to the touch.

SECTION VI.

The Impolicy of the Practice of Strict Communion considered.

In the affairs of religion and morality, where a Divine authority is interposed, the first and chief attention is due to its dictates, which we are not permitted to violate in the least instance, though we proposed by such violation to promote the interests of religion itself. She scorns to be indebted even for conquest to a foreign force: "the weapons of her warfare are not carnal." We have on this account carefully abstained from urging the imprudence of the measure we have ventured to propose, from an apprehension that we might be suspected of attempt

ing to bias the suffrage of our readers by considerations and motives disproportioned to the majesty of revealed truth. But having, as I trust, sufficiently shown that the practice of strict communion derives no support from that quarter, the way is open for the introduction of a few remarks on the natural tendency and effect of the two opposite systems. I would just premise that I hope no offence will be given to Pedobaptists, by denominating their sentiments on the subject of baptism *erroneous*, as though it were expected that our assertion should be accepted for proof. It is designed as a simple statement of my opinion, and is assumed as the basis of my reasoning with my stricter brethren.

Truth and error, as they are essentially opposite in their nature, so the causes to which they are indebted for their perpetuity and triumph are not less so. Whatever retards a spirit of inquiry is favourable to error; whatever promotes it, to truth. But nothing, it will be acknowledged, has a greater tendency to obstruct the exercise of free inquiry than the spirit and feeling of a party. Let a doctrine, however erroneous, become a party distinction, and it is at once intrenched in interests and attachments which make it extremely difficult for the most powerful artillery of reason to dislodge it. It becomes a point of honour in the leaders of such parties, which is from thence communicated to their followers, to defend and support their respective peculiarities to the last; and, as a natural consequence, to shut their ears against all the pleas and remonstrances by which they are assailed. Even the wisest and best of men are seldom aware how much they are susceptible of this sort of influence; and while the offer of a world would be insufficient to engage them to recant a known truth, or to subscribe an acknowledged error, they are often retained in a willing captivity to prejudices and opinions which have no other support, and which, if they could lose sight of party feelings, they would almost instantly abandon. To what other cause can we ascribe the attachment of Fenelon and of Pascal, men of exalted genius and undoubted piety, to the doctrine of transubstantiation and other innumerable absurdities of the Church of Rome? It is this alone which has ensured a sort of immortality to those hideous productions of the human mind, the shapeless abortions of night and darkness, which reason, left to itself, would have crushed in the moment of their birth.

It is observable that scientific truths make their way in the world with much more ease and rapidity than religious. No sooner is a philosophical opinion promulgated than it undergoes at first a severe and rigorous scrutiny; and if it is found to coincide with the results of experiment, it is speedily adopted, and quietly takes its place among the improvements of the age. Every acquisition of this kind is considered as a common property; as an accession to the general stores of mental opulence. Thus the knowledge of nature, the further it advances from its head, not only enlarges its channel by the accession of tributary streams, but gradually purifies itself from the mixture of error. If we search for the reason of the facility with which scientific improvements establish themselves in preference to religious, we shall find it in the absence of combination, in there being no class of men closely united

who have an interest real or imaginary in obstructing their progress We hear, it is true, of parties in the republic of letters.; but if such language is not to be considered as entirely allusive and metaphorical, the ties which unite them are so slight and feeble, compared to those which attach to religious societies, as scarcely to deserve the name. The spirit of party was much more sensibly felt in the ancient schools of philosophy than in the modern, on account of philosophical inquiries embracing a class of subjects which are now considered as no longer belonging to its province. Before revelation appeared, whatever is most deeply interesting in the contemplation of God, of man, or of a future state fell under the cognizance of philosophy; and hence it was cultivated with no inconsiderable portion of that moral sensibility, that solicitude and alternation of hope and fear respecting an invisible state, which are now absorbed by the gospel. From that time the departments of theology and philosophy have become totally distinct, and the genius of the former free and unfettered.

In religious inquiries, few feel themselves at liberty to follow without restraint the light of evidence and the guidance of truth, in consequence of some previous engagement with a party; and, though the attachment to it might originally be purely voluntary, and still continues such, the natural love of consistency, the fear of shame, together with other motives sufficiently obvious, powerfully contribute to perpetuate and confirm it. When an attachment to the fundamental truths of religion is the basis of the alliance, the steadiness, constancy, and perseverance it produces are of the utmost advantage; and hence we admire the wisdom of Christ in employing and consecrating the social nature of man in the formation of a church. It is utterly impossible to calculate the benefits of the publicity and support which Christianity derives from that source; nor will it be doubted that the intrepidity evinced in confessing the most obnoxious truths, and enduring all the indignities and sufferings which result from their promulgation, is, in a great measure, to be ascribed to the same cause. The concentration of the wills and efforts of Christians rendered the church a powerful antagonist to the world. But when the Christian profession became split and divided into separate communities, each of which, along with certain fundamental truths, retained a portion of error, its reformation became difficult, just in proportion to the strength of these combinations. Religious parties imply a tacit compact, not merely to sustain the fundamental truths of revelation (which was the original design of the constitution of a church), but also to uphold the incidental peculiarities by which they are distinguished. They are so many ramparts or fortifications erected in order to give a security and support to certain systems of doctrine and discipline, beyond what they derive from their native force and evidence.

The difficulty of reforming the corruptions of Christianity is great, in a state of things where the fear of being eclipsed, and the anxiety in each denomination to extend itself as much as possible, engage, in spite of the personal piety of its members, all the solicitude and ardour which are not immediately devoted to the most essential truths; where

correct conceptions on subordinate subjects are scarcely aimed at, but the particular views which the party has adopted are either objects of indolent acquiescence or zealous attachment. In such a state, opinions are no otherwise regarded than as they affect the interest of a party; whatever conduces to augment its numbers or its credit must be supported at all events; whatever is of a contrary tendency, discountenanced and suppressed. How often do we find much zeal expended in the defence of sentiments, recommended neither by their evidence nor their importance, which, could their incorporation with an established creed be forgotten, would be quietly consigned to oblivion. Thus the waters of life, instead of that unobstructed circulation which would diffuse health, fertility, and beauty, are diverted from their channels and drawn into pools and reservoirs, where, from their stagnant state, they acquire feculence and pollution.

The inference we would deduce from these facts is, that if we wish to revive an exploded truth, or to restore an obsolete practice, it is of the greatest moment to present it to the public in a manner least likely to produce the collision of party. But this is equivalent to saying, in other words, that it ought not to be made the basis of a sect; for the prejudices of party are always reciprocal, and in no instance is that great law of motion more applicable, that "reaction is always equal to action, and contrary thereto." While it is maintained as a private opinion, by which I mean one not characteristic of a sect, it stands upon its proper merits, mingles with facility in different societies, and in proportion to its evidence, and the attention it excites, insinuates itself like leaven, till the whole is leavened.

Such, it should seem, was the conduct of the Baptists before the time of Luther. It appears from the testimony of ecclesiastical historians, that their sentiments prevailed to a considerable extent among the Waldenses and Albigenses, the precursors of the Reformation, to whom the crime of anabaptism is frequently ascribed among other heresies: it is probable, however, that it did not prevail universally; nor is there the smallest trace to be discovered of its being made a term of communion. When the same opinions on this subject were publicly revived in the sixteenth century, under the most unfavourable auspices, and allied with turbulence, anarchy, and blood, no wonder they met with an unwelcome reception, and that, contemplated through such a medium, they incurred the reprobation of the wise and good. Whether the English Baptists held at first any part of the wild and seditious sentiments of the German fanatics, it is difficult to say: supposing they did (of which I am not aware there is the smallest evidence), it is certain they soon abandoned them, and adopted the same system of religion with other nonconformists, except on the article of baptism. But it is much to be lamented that they continued to insist on that article as a term of communion, by which they excited the resentment of other denominations, and facilitated the means of confounding them with the German Anabaptists, with whom they possessed nothing in common besides an opinion on one particular rite. One feature of resemblance, however, joined to an identity of name, was sufficient to surmount in the public feeling the im

pression of all the points of discrepancy or of contrast, and to subject them to a portion of the infamy attached to the ferocious insurgents of Munster. From that period, the success of the Baptist sentiments became identified with the growth of a sect which, rising under the most unfavourable auspices, was entirely destitute of the resources of wordly influence and the means of popular attraction; and an opinion which, by its native simplicity and evidence, is entitled to command the suffrages of the world, was pent up and confined within the narrow precincts of a party, where it laboured under an insupportable weight of prejudice. It was seldom examined by an impartial appeal to the sacred oracles, or regarded in any other light than as the whimsical appendage of a sect, who disgraced themselves at the outset by the most criminal excesses, and were at no subsequent period sufficiently distinguished by talents or numbers to command general attention.

Nothing is more common than for zeal to overshoot its mark. If a determined enemy of the Baptists had been consulted on the most effectual method of rendering their principles unpopular, there is little doubt but that he would have recommended the very measures we have pursued: the first and most obvious effect of which has been to regenerate an inconceivable mass of prejudice in other denominations. To proclaim to the world our determination to treat as "heathen men and publicans" all who are not immediately prepared to concur with our views of baptism, what is it less than the language of hostility and defiance; admirably adapted to discredit the party which exhibits, and the principles which have occasioned, such a conduct? By thus investing these principles with an importance which does not belong to them, by making them coextensive with the existence of a church, they have indisposed men to listen to the evidence by which they are supported; and attempting to establish by authority the unanimity which should be the fruit of conviction, have deprived themselves of the most effectual means of producing it. To say that such a mode of proceeding is not adapted to convince, that refusing Pedobaptists the right of communion has no tendency to produce a change of views, is to employ most inadequate language: it has a powerful tendency to the contrary; it can scarcely fail to produce impressions most unfavourable to the system with which it is connected, impressions which the gentlest minds find it difficult to distinguish from the effects of insult and degradation.

It is not, however, merely by this sort of reaction that prejudice is excited unfavourable to the extension of our principles; but by the instinctive feelings of self-defence. Upon the system of strict communion, the moment a member of a Pedobaptist church becomes convinced of the invalidity of his infant baptism, he must deem it obligatory upon him to relinquish his station, and dissolve his connexion with the church; and as superiority of ministerial talents and character is a mere matter of preference, but duty a matter of necessity, he must at all events connect himself with a Baptist congregation whatever sacrifice it may cost him, and whatever loss he may incur. Though his pastor should possess the profundity and unction of an Edwards, or

the eloquence of a Spencer, he must quit him for the most superficial declaimer, rather than be guilty of spiritual fornication. How is it possible for principles fraught with such a corollary not to be contemplated with anxiety by our Pedobaptist brethren, who, however they might be disposed to exercise candour towards our sentiments, considered in themselves, cannot fail to perceive the most disorganizing tendency in this their usual appendage. Viewed in such a connexion, their prevalence is a blow at the very root of Pedobaptist societies, since the moment we succeed in making a convert, we disqualify him for continuing a member. We deposite a seed of alienation and discord, which threatens their dissolution, so that we need not be surprised if other denominations should be tempted to compare us to the Euphratean horsemen in the Apocalypse, who are described as "having tails like scorpions, and with them they did hurt."

To these causes we must undoubtedly impute the superior degree of prejudice displayed by that class of Christians to whom we make the nearest approach, compared to such as are separated from us by a wider interval. A disposition to fair and liberal concession on the points at issue is almost confined to the members of established churches; and while the most celebrated Episcopal divines, both Popish and Protestant, as well as those of the Scotch church, feel no hesitation in acknowledging the import of the word baptize is to *immerse*, that such was the primitive mode of baptism, and that the right of infants to that ordinance is rather to be sustained on the ground of ancient usage than the authority of Scripture, our dissenting brethren are displeased with these concessions, deny there is any proof that immersion was ever used in primitive times, and speak of the extension of baptism to infants with as much confidence as though it were among the plainest and most undeniable dictates of revelation.*

To such a height has this animosity been carried, that there are not wanting persons who seem anxious to revive the recollection of Munster, and by republishing the narrative of the enormities perpetrated there, under the title of the History of the Baptists, to implicate us in the infamy and guilt of those transactions. While we must reprobate such a spirit, we

* Campbell, speaking of the authors of the vulgar version, observes,—"Some words they have transferred from the original into their language; others they have translated. But it would not be always easy to find their reason for making this difference. Thus, the word περιτομὴ they have translated *circumcisio*, which exactly corresponds in etymology; but the word βάπτισμα they have retained, changing only the letters from Greek to Roman. Yet the latter was just as susceptible of a literal version into Latin as the former. *Immersio, tinctio*, answers as exactly in one case, as *circumcisio* in the other." A little after he observes, "I should think the word immersion (which, though of Latin origin, is an English noun, regularly formed from the word to *immerse*) a better English name than baptism, were we now at liberty to make a choice: but we are not."—*Preliminary Dissertations to the Translation of the Gospels*, p. 354, 355. 4to ed. He elsewhere mentions it as one of the strongest instances of prejudice, that he has known some persons of piety who have denied that the word baptize signifies to immerse.

With respect to the *subject*, it is worthy of observation that the authors of the celebrated scheme of popish doctrine and discipline called the *Interim* enumerate the baptism of infants among *traditions*, and that in the most emphatic manner. For, having stated that the church has two rules of faith, Scripture and tradition, they observe, after treating of the first, "*ecclesia habet quoque traditiones, inter alia baptismus parvulorum*," &c. They mention, however, no other; from whence it is natural to infer that they considered this as the strongest instance of that species of rules. The total silence of Scripture has induced not a few of the most illustrious scholars to consider infant baptism not of Divine right; among whom, were we disposed to boast of great names, we might mention Salmasius, Suicer, and, above all, Sir Isaac Newton, who, if we may believe the honest Whiston, frequently declared to him his conviction that the Baptists were the only Christians who had not symbolized with the Church of Rome.—See *Whiston's Memoirs of his own Life*

are compelled to acknowledge that the practice of exclusive communion is admirably adapted to excite it in minds of a certain order.

That practice is not less objectionable on another ground. By discouraging Pedobaptists from frequenting our assemblies, it militates against the most effectual means of diffusing the sentiments which we consider most consonant to the sacred oracles. It cannot be expected that pious worshippers will attend, except from absolute necessity, where they are detained, if we may so speak, in the courts of the gentiles, and denied access to the interior privileges of the sanctuary.

The congregations, accordingly, where this practice prevails, are almost entirely composed of persons of our own persuasion, who are so far from requiring an additional stimulus, that it is much oftener necessary to restrain than to excite their ardour, while the only description of persons who could be possibly benefited by instruction are out of its reach; compelled by this intolerant practice to join societies where they will hear nothing but what is adapted to confirm them in their ancient prejudices. Thus, an impassable barrier is erected between the Baptists and other denominations, in consequence of which few opportunities are afforded of trying the effect of calm and serious argumentation in situations where alone it could prove effectual. In those Baptist churches in which an opposite plan has been adopted, the attendance of such as are not of our sentiments, meeting with no discouragement, is often extensive; Baptists and Pedobaptists, by participating in the same privileges, become closely united in the ties of friendship; of which the effect is uniformly found to be a perpetual increase in the number of the former, compared to the latter, till in some societies the opposite sentiments have nearly subsided and disappeared.

Nor is this more than might be expected from the nature of things, supposing us to have truth on our side. For, admitting this to be the case, what can give permanence to the sentiments to which we are opposed, except a recumbent indolence or an active prejudice? And is it not evident that the practice of exclusive communion has the strongest tendency to foster both those evils, the former by withdrawing, I might say repelling, the erroneous from the best means of instruction,—the latter by the apparent harshness and severity of such a proceeding? It is not by keeping at a distance from mankind that we must expect to acquire an ascendency over them, but by approaching, by conciliating them, and securing a passage to their understanding through the medium of their hearts. Truth will glide into the mind through the channel of the affections, which, were it to approach in the naked majesty of evidence, would meet with a certain repulse.

Betraying a total ignorance or forgetfulness of these indubitable facts, what is the conduct of our opponents? They assume a menacing aspect, proclaim themselves the only true church, and assert that they alone are entitled to the Christian sacraments. None are alarmed at this language, none are induced to submit; but turning with a smile or a frown to gentler leaders, they leave us to triumph without a combat, and to dispute without an opponent.

If we consider the way in which men are led to form just conclu-

sions on the principal subjects of controversy, we shall not often find that it is the fruit of an independent effort of mind, determined to search for truth in her most hidden recesses, and discover her under every disguise. The number of such elevated spirits is small; and though evidence is the only source of rational conviction, a variety of favourable circumstances usually contributes to bring it into contact with the mind, such as frequent intercourse, a favourable disposition towards the party which maintains it, habits of deference and respect, and gratitude for benefits received. The practice of confining the communion to our own denomination seems studiously contrived to preclude us from these advantages, and to transfer them to the opposite side.

The policy of intolerance is exactly proportioned to the capacity of inspiring fear. The Church of Rome for many ages practised it with infinite advantage, because she possessed ample means of intimidation Her pride grew with her success, her intolerance with her pride; and she did not aspire to the lofty pretension of being the only *true church* till she saw monarchs at her feet and held kingdoms in chains; till she was flushed with victory, giddy with her elevation, and drunk with the blood of saints. But what was policy in her would be the height of infatuation in us, who are neither entitled by our situation nor by our crimes to aspire to this guilty pre-eminence. I am fully persuaded that few of our brethren have duly reflected on the strong resemblance which subsists between the pretensions of the Church of Rome and the principles implied in strict communion; both equally intolerant; the one armed with pains and penalties, the other, I trust, disdaining such aid; the one the intolerance of power, the other of weakness.

From a full conviction that our views as a denomination correspond with the dictates of Scripture, it is impossible for me to entertain a doubt of their ultimate prevalence; but unless we retrace our steps, and cultivate a cordial union with our fellow-christians, I greatly question whether their success will in any degree be ascribable to our efforts. It is much more probable that the light will arise in another quarter, from persons by whom we are unknown, but who, in consequence of an unction from the Holy One, are led to examine the Scripture with perfect impartiality, and in the ardour of their pursuit after truth, alike to overlook the misconduct of those who have opposed and of those who have maintained it.

Happily, the final triumph of truth is not dependent on human modes of exhibition. Man is the recipient, not the author, of it; it partakes of the nature of the Deity; it is his offspring, its indissoluble relation to whom is a surer pledge of its perpetuity and support than finite power or policy. While we are at a certainty respecting the final issue, "the times and the seasons God hath put in his own power;" nor are we ever more liable to err than when, in surveying the purposes of God, we descend from the elevation of general views to a minute specification of times and instruments. How long the ordinance of baptism in its purity and simplicity may be doomed to neglect it is not for us to conjecture; but of this we are fully persuaded, it will never be generally restored to the church through the medium of a party. This

mode of procedure has been already sufficiently tried, and is found utterly ineffectual.

The labour bestowed upon these sheets has not arisen from an indifference to the interests of truth, but from a sincere wish to promote them, by disengaging it from the unnatural confinement in which it has been detained by the injudicious conduct of its advocates. How far the reasoning adduced or the spirit displayed on this subject is entitled to approbation must be left to the judgment of the religious public. If any offence has been given by the appearance of unbecoming severity, it will give me real concern; and the more so because there are not a few among our professed opponents in this controversy to whom I look up with undissembled esteem and veneration.

Having omitted nothing which appeared essentially connected with the subject, I hasten to close this disquisition; previously to which it may not be improper briefly to recall the attention to the principal topics of argument. We have endeavoured to show that the practice of strict communion derives no support from the supposed priority of baptism to the Lord's Supper in the order of institution, which order is exactly the reverse; that it is not countenanced by the tenor of the apostles' commission, nor by apostolic precedent, the spirit of which is in our favour, proceeding on principles totally dissimilar to the case under discussion; that the opposite practice is enforced by the obligations of Christian charity; that it is indubitably comprehended within the canon which enjoins forbearance towards mistaken brethren; that the system of our opponents *unchurches* every Pedobaptist community; that it rests on no general principle; that it attempts to establish an impossible medium; that it inflicts a punishment which is capricious and unjust; and finally, that by fomenting prejudice and precluding the most effectual means of conviction, it defeats its own purpose.

Should the reasoning under any one of these heads be found to be conclusive, however it may fail in others, it will go far towards establishing our leading position, that no church has a right to establish *terms of communion which are not terms of salvation.* With high consideration of the talents of many of my brethren who differ from me, I have yet no apprehension that the sum total of the argument admits a satisfactory reply.

A tender consideration of human imperfection is not merely the dictate of revelation, but the law of nature, exemplified in the most striking manner in the conduct of Him whom we all profess to follow. How wide the interval which separated his religious knowledge and attainments from that of his disciples; he, the fountain of illumination, they encompassed with infirmities! But did he recede from them on that account? No: he drew the bond of union closer, imparted successive streams of effulgence, till he incorporated his spirit with theirs, and elevated them into a nearer resemblance of himself. In imitating by our conduct towards our mistaken brethren this great exemplar, we cannot err. By walking together with them as far as we are agreed, our agreement will extend, our differences lessen, and love, which

rejoiceth in the truth, will gradually open our hearts to higher and nobler inspirations.

Might we indulge a hope that not only our denomination, but every other description of Christians, would act upon these principles, we should hail the dawn of a brighter day, and consider it as a nearer approach to the ultimate triumph of the church than the annals of time have yet recorded. In the accomplishment of our Saviour's prayer, we should behold a demonstration of the divinity of his mission, which the most impious could not resist; we should behold in the church a peaceful haven, inviting us to retire from the tossings and perils of this unquiet ocean to a sacred enclosure, a sequestered spot, which the storms and tempests of the world were not permitted to invade.

> "Intus aquæ dulces, vivoque sedilia saxo:
> Nympharum domus. Hic fessas non vincula naves
> Ulla tenent: unco non adligat anchora morsu."—*Virgil.*

The genius of the gospel, let it once for all be remembered, is not ceremonial but spiritual, consisting, not in meats or drinks, or outward observances, but in the cultivation of such interior graces as compose the essence of virtue, perfect the character, and purify the heart. These form the soul of religion; all the rest are but her terrestrial attire, which she will lay aside when she passes the threshold of eternity. When, therefore, the obligations of humility and love come into competition with a punctual observance of external rites, the genius of religion will easily determine to which we should incline: but when the question is, not whether we shall attend to them ourselves, but whether we shall enforce them on others, the answer is still more ready. All attempts to urge men forward, even in the right path, beyond the measure of their light, are impracticable in our situation, if they were lawful; and unlawful, if they were practicable. Augment their light, conciliate their affections, and they will follow of their own accord.

POSTSCRIPT.

An objection to the hypothesis which assigns the origin of *Christian* baptism to the commission which the apostles received at our Lord's resurrection, may possibly be urged from the baptisms performed by his disciples during his personal ministry; and as no notice is taken of that circumstance in the body of the work, I beg leave to submit the following observations to the reader:—We are informed by one of the evangelists, that Christ, by the instrumentality of his disciples, at one period "made and baptized more disciples than John."* The following remarks may possibly cast some light on this subject:—

* John iv. 1

1. A Divine commission was given to the son of Zechariah to announce the speedy manifestation of the Messiah; or, which is equivalent, to declare that "the kingdom of God was at hand," with an injunction solemnly to immerse in water as many as, in consequence of that intelligence, professed repentance and reformation of life; and as he was the only person who had been known to initiate his disciples by that rite, it was natural for him to be distinguished by the appellation of the Baptist, or the Immerser. The Scriptures are totally silent respecting any mission to baptize apart from his. It is by no means certain, however, that he was the only person who performed that ceremony; indeed, when we consider the prodigious multitudes who flocked to him, the "inhabitants of Jerusalem, Judea, and all the region round about Jordan," it seems scarcely practicable: he most probably employed coadjutors, though, the practice having originated with him, it was foreign to the purpose of the evangelists to notice that circumstance.

2. Our Lord, who had already evinced the profoundest respect to his mission by receiving baptism at his hands, was, in consequence of his being the Messiah, undoubtedly authorized personally to perform any religious rite or office which was at that time in force, as well as to delegate to others the power of performing it; and as immersion, in token of repentance and preparation for the kingdom of God, then at hand, was an important branch of the religion then obligatory, it was with the greatest propriety that he not only submitted to it himself, but authorized his disciples to perform it. This, however, is by no means sufficient to constitute a distinct rite or ordinance; and since it was not accompanied with a distinct signification, it could not be considered as originating a new constitution, but as a mere co-operation with his forerunner in one and the same work.

3. We have already shown at large that the principal difference between John's baptism and that which the apostles were commissioned to perform after our Saviour's ascension consisted in the former not being celebrated in the name of Jesus. But there is just as much difficulty in supposing it performed by his disciples in that name, during his abode on earth, as by his forerunner. It would have equally defeated the purpose of that caution which he uniformly maintained; and it is absurd to suppose that he would strictly charge his disciples to tell no man that he was the Christ, while he authorized them to disclose that very secret to the mixed multitude as often as they baptized; nor could the use of his name in that ordinance be separated from such a disclosure.

4. In addition to this, it must be remembered that John and our Lord (by the hands of his disciples) both baptized at the same period: their ministry was contemporary. Now if we assert that our Lord enjoined one confession of faith in baptism, and John another, we shall have different dispensations of religion subsisting at the same time, and must suppose the people were under an obligation to believe one thing as the disciples of John, and another as the disciples of Christ. But this it is impossible to admit. There is unquestionably, at all seasons, a perfect harmony in the economies of religion, so that two different

ones are never in force at one and the same time. The first ceases when the next succeeds, just as Judaism was abolished by Christianity, and the patriarchal dispensation superseded by Judaism. Unless we are prepared to assert that the dispensations of religion are not obligatory, one light in which they must be considered is that of different laws, or codes of law; but it is essential to the nature of laws that the new one, except it be merely declaratory, invariably repeals the old. In whatever particular it differs, it necessarily abolishes or annuls the former. But as John continued to baptize by Divine authority at the same time with the disciples of our Saviour, it is evident his institution was not superseded; consequently, it was of such a nature that it could subsist in conjunction with the baptism performed by our Lord through the hands of his apostles. But, for the reason already alleged, this could not have been the case, unless it had been one and the same thing. The inference I wish to deduce from the whole is, that the baptisms celebrated by Christ's disciples during his personal ministry in no respect differed from John's, either in the action itself or in the import, but were merely a joint execution of the same work; agreeably to which, we find a perfect identity in the language which our Saviour enjoined his disciples to use, and in the preaching of John: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of God is at hand." Whatever information our Lord imparted to his disciples beyond that which was communicated by his forerunner (which we all know was much) was given in detached portions, at distinct intervals, and was never imbodied or incorporated with any positive institution till after his ascension, which may be considered as the commencement of the Christian dispensation in its strictest sense.

THE

ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE

BETWEEN

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

AND THE

BAPTISM OF JOHN,

MORE FULLY STATED AND CONFIRMED;

IN REPLY TO A PAMPHLET, ENTITLED "A PLEA FOR PRIMITIVE COMMUNION."

[PUBLISHED IN 1816.]

PREFACE.

WHETHER the writer of the following pages has acted judiciously in noticing the anonymous author of the *Plea*, &c. it is not for him to determine. He was certainly not induced to reply by any apprehension that the arguments of his opponent would produce much effect on candid and enlightened minds: but he recollected that what is not answered is often deemed unanswerable. He has confined himself, as the reader will perceive, to that branch of the controversy which relates to the baptism of John; the consideration of the remaining parts will more properly occur in reply to a work which is already announced to the public by a person of distinguished reputation. With an answer to that publication it is the decided resolution of this author to terminate *his* part of the controversy.

LEICESTER, *February* 14, 1816.

THE

ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE

BETWEEN

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

AND THE

BAPTISM OF JOHN.

Though the author of the "Plea for Primitive Communion" has not thought fit to annex his name to that publication, as truth alone is the legitimate object of controversy, his claim to attention may be justly considered as little, if at all, impaired by that omission. Religious inquiry is an affair of principles, not of persons; and under whatever shape an author chooses to present himself to the public, he is entitled to notice in proportion to the force of his conceptions and the candour of his spirit. How far the author under present consideration is possessed of these qualities must be left to the judgment of an impartial public.

As he has confined nearly his whole attention to the question of the identity of John's baptism with the ordinance now in force, without pretending to enter into the general merits of the controversy, and this is a question which admits of separate discussion, and is in itself of some moment, the following pages will be devoted to a defence of the sentiments which have been already advanced on that subject.

Previously to this, however, the patience of the reader is entreated for a few moments, while we endeavour clearly to state the *bearing* of this question on the controversy with which it has been connected. It was in deference to the sentiments of his opponents, rather than his own, that the author was induced to bestow so much attention upon it in his former treatise, persuaded as he is that its connexion with the point in debate is casual and incidental, rather than real and intrinsic; since the only possible advantage to the cause of mixed communion, resulting from its decision, is the overthrow of an argument most feebly constructed. To be convinced of this, it is only necessary to remember that the admission of what our opponents contend for would merely prove that the ordinance of baptism was promulgated at an *earlier period* than the Lord's Supper. But in determining a question of duty resulting from positive laws, the era of their promulgation is a consideration totally foreign; we have merely to consider *what is enjoined*, and to what description of persons or things the regulation applies, without troubling ourselves to inquire into the chronological order of its enactment. In the details of civil life, no man thinks of regulating his actions

by an appeal to the respective dates of the existing laws, but solely by a regard to their just interpretation; and were it once admitted as a maxim that the particular law latest enacted must invariably be last obeyed, the affairs of mankind would fall into utter confusion. It would be the highest presumption to pretend to penetrate so far into the breast of the legislator, and into reasons of state, as to form a conjecture on the comparative importance of our duties, or the respective relations which they bear to each other, by an appeal to the distinct periods in which the laws were promulgated; nor is there any absurdity in supposing it possible that, for the wisest purposes, the law which is *last* enacted may prescribe the performance of an action antecedently to a different one enjoined by a prior enactment. Besides, the most extensive branch of the system of rules which is in force in this, and perhaps in most other countries, arises out of immemorial customs, which it would baffle the profoundest antiquarian to trace to their origin; whence it is evident that the principle in question is necessarily excluded from the widest department of legal obligations. It is a principle as repugnant to the nature of Divine as it is to human legislation. It appears from the history of the patriarchs, that sacrificial rites were ordained much earlier than circumcision, but no sooner was the latter enjoined, than it demanded the earliest attention; and the offerings prescribed on the birth of a child did not precede but were subsequent to the ceremony of circumcision.

In the case of moral obligations, no one pretends that their reciprocal relation and dependence is to be ascertained by an appeal to the distinct periods of their institution: their co-existence with human nature precludes the possibility of applying such a test; and he who consults impartially the dictates of conscience, confirmed and enlightened by revelation, will seldom feel himself embarrassed with respect either to the nature or the order of his duties.

In the case of positive duties, that is, such as result entirely from the *revealed* will of God, and with respect to which the voice of nature is silent, how far they are so inseparably linked together as to form a moral whole, in such a manner that the omission of one part renders an attention to the other a nullity, must depend entirely on the language of the institute. To attempt to establish any conclusion where that is silent is at once to incur the censure justly attached to the application of hypothesis in the interpretation of positive laws, with this additional aggravation, that the hypothesis adopted on the present occasion is at least as precarious and unfounded as the worst of those by which the advocates of infant baptism have attempted to vindicate their practice. With unparalleled inconsistency, while the champions of strict communion affect on the subject of baptism the utmost veneration for the letter of Scripture, they are driven in support of their sentiments to appeal, not to *what is enjoined*—not to a syllable of Scripture, but to a chronological deduction of positive rites; a hard necessity surely, and the more so when it will appear in the sequel that this their forlorn post is untenable.

Before we proceed to notice the objections of the author of the *Plea*

to the statements which have been made on the subject of John's baptism, it will be necessary briefly to recapitulate the grounds on which it was affirmed to be essentially distinct from the ordinance now in use. To such as have not perused the former treatise, the discussion would scarcely be intelligible without it; to such as have, it is possible some particulars may be presented in a clearer light.

The attentive reader of the New Testament will not have failed to remark that the rite performed by John is rarely, if ever, introduced without the addition of some explanatory phrase, or epithet, intended apparently to distinguish it from every preceding or subsequent religious observance. Thus it is sometimes denominated the baptism of John, on other occasions baptism in water, and the baptism of repentance but is never expressed in the absolute form in which the mention of Christian baptism invariably occurs. When the twelve disciples at Ephesus are asked into what (*i. e.* into what profession) they were baptized, they reply into the baptism of John. Though innumerable persons were baptized by St. Paul, we read of no such expression as the baptism of Paul; on the contrary, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, he expresses a sort of pious horror at the very idea of such a supposition. Whoever considers the extreme precision which the inspired historians maintain in the choice of the terms employed to represent religious ordinances, will perceive this circumstance to possess considerable weight.

It derives much additional strength, however, from reflecting that John's baptism is not only distinctly characterized in the evangelical narratives, but that he himself contrasts it with a superior one, which he directs his hearers to expect at the hand of the Messiah. "I indeed," said he, "baptize you in water, but there standeth one among you, whose shoe-latchets I am not worthy to unloose; he shall baptize you in the Holy Ghost and in fire;" referring unquestionably to that redundance of prophetic and miraculous gifts which were bestowed on the church after the effusion of the Spirit. We accordingly find, that after his resurrection our Lord commissioned his apostles to teach and baptize all nations, the execution of which order was *usually* accompanied by the collation of such gifts on believers as fully corresponded to those predictions. Though He who is confined to no times or seasons was pleased in some instances to communicate these preternatural endowments previously to the act of baptizing, at others not in connexion with that rite, yet that they were its usual and expected concomitants is evident from the language of St. Paul to the disciples at Ephesus, who, not having heard of such an effusion of the Spirit, were interrogated in the following terms: "Into what then were ye baptized?" a question totally irrelevant but upon the supposition that these gifts were the usual appendage or effect of that ordinance. No such consequences followed the rite administered by John; an important disparity, to which he himself repeatedly directed the attention of his followers, as a decisive proof of his personal inferiority to him that *was to come*, as well as of the ceremony he administered to that which should usher in the succeeding dispensation. In exact agreement with

the genius of eastern phraseology, he suppresses the mention of *water* on this occasion, choosing rather to characterize an ordinance accompanied with such stupendous effects by its more elevated feature, rather than by one in which it coincided with his own.

Again, it is universally admitted that Christian baptism has invariably been administered in the name of Jesus, and that circumstance is essential to its validity; while it is evident from the solicitude with which our Saviour avoided the avowal of himself as the Messiah, that during his personal ministry his name was not publicly employed as the object of a religious rite. After he had been declared on the mount of transfiguration to be the Son of God, he charged his disciples to tell no man of it till he was risen from the dead; and when Peter had solemnly avowed his profession of faith in him under the same character, he and his fellow-apostles were strictly enjoined to tell no man that he *was the Christ*. Nor is there a single example of his publicly acknowledging that fact until his arraignment before the high-priest. But how this is consistent with the practice of baptizing in his name, which must have been equivalent at least to a public confession of his being the Messiah, it is difficult to conceive. If we examine the matter more closely, we shall perceive that ceremony to import much more; that it includes an act of adoration and of worship, of which He in whose name we are immersed is the avowed object. To multiply words with a view to demonstrate the inconsistency of such a procedure with the acknowledged reserve maintained by our Lord on this subject would be to insult the understanding of my readers; nor when furnished with certain matter of fact are we left to form an opinion from previous probabilities. The historian informs us that while John was baptizing, amid an immense concourse of people from various parts of Judea, *all men were musing in their hearts whether he were the Christ or not*,* and that the deputation sent from the sanhedrim to inquire into his character were disposed to infer, from his introducing a new religious rite, that he pretended himself to be the Messiah. But how is it possible, let me ask, that such a question should arise among the people on the hypothesis maintained by our opponents? or how could it enter into their imagination to infer, from his baptizing in the name of Jesus, that he himself was, or that he pretended to be, the Messiah? His constant and daily practice must have completely precluded such a suspicion.

If St. Paul's citation of the language of John, in the nineteenth of the Acts, be correct, what he said to the people was this—"That they *should* believe on him who was to come."† The epithet ὁ ἐρχόμενος, *he who is coming*, it is generally admitted, was the usual appellation applied to the Messiah at that period, which, while it expresses the certainty and near approach of the event of his coming, intimates not less clearly its *futurity*. At the time when the son of Zechariah entered on his ministry, nothing could be more accurate than the idea conveyed by that phraseology—the Messiah was not yet manifest to Israel: John was sent before him to announce his speedy appearance; he was

* Luke iii. 15. † Acts xix. 4

as yet coming, not actually come; on which account, the language which the forerunner held was precise and appropriate; it was not a demand of present faith in any known individual, but was limited to a *future* faith on a certain personage who was about to evince his title to the character he assumed by his personal appearance and miracles. He said to the people that they *should* believe in him that was to come. Could the same person, let me ask, at the same moment, be described by terms expressive of the present and of the future tense, at once as an existing individual, a person historically known, and as one that was to come? In a word, if John expressed the act of faith which he required in the future tense,* it unquestionably respected a future act; and if he described its object under the term ὁ ἐρχόμενος, *he that is to come*, he did not immerse in the name of Jesus, which would have been a palpable contradiction.

Again, the spiritual import of Christian baptism, as asserted by St. Paul, transcends incomparably the measure of religious knowledge possessed during the ministry of John. "Know ye not," is his appeal to Christians, "that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."† We have here an appeal to the conscience of all baptized persons respecting the spiritual signification of that ordinance, the views which it embraced, and the obligations resulting from thence to a holy and heavenly life. What is the meaning of the words *baptized into his death?* Whatever else it may comprehend, it unquestionably means the being baptized into a belief of his death. But at the time that John was fulfilling his course, this belief was so far from possessing the minds of his converts, that even the apostles were not only ignorant of that event, but impatient of its mention; and with respect to his resurrection, we find these same apostles after the transfiguration inquiring among themselves, "what the rising from the dead could mean;"‡ while from the expectation of the Jews at large, nothing was more abhorrent than the death and crucifixion of their Messiah. While they were thus unacquainted with the principal fact it is designed to exhibit, how could they possibly comprehend the import of Christian baptism? In all probability they regarded the consecrated use of water merely as an emblem of purification, of that reformation of manners to which they were summoned; for to such a use of it they had long been accustomed; but for the sublime mysteries of the Christian sacrament, connected with events of which they were ignorant, and with truths which were veiled from their eyes, they were utterly unprepared. It is impossible to evade the force of this argument by distinguishing between the disciples of John and those who were converted to the Christian faith at a subsequent period. The language of St. Paul precludes the possibility of such a distinction. "*As many of us*," says he, "as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death;" which is

* πιστεύσωσι, Acts xix. 4. † Rom. vi. 3, 4. ‡ Mark ix. 10.

surely equivalent to affirming that whoever were not baptized into his death were not baptized into Christ. But the disciples of John were not baptized into (the belief of) his death. Therefore they were not baptized into Christ.

We have already remarked, in a former treatise, that as the ministry of John commenced previously to that of the Messiah, which succeeded his baptism, no rite celebrated at that time is entitled to a place among Christian sacraments, since they did not commence with the Christian dispensation, nor issue from the authority of Christ, as Head of the church. The sacraments properly Christian undoubtedly belong to *the kingdom of God;* a phrase which is constantly employed in Scripture to denote that state of things which is placed under the avowed administration of the Messiah, and which consequently could not precede his personal appearance. But during his residence on earth, until his resurrection, this kingdom is uniformly represented as future, though near at hand. Even after John's imprisonment, the language which he held respecting that object is the same :—"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel;"* which is also the precise intelligence he commanded the seventy disciples to proclaim† a little before his decease. He was inaugurated into his office at his baptism, till which period he remained in the obscurity of private life, at the utmost remove from assuming a legislative character.

An attention to the general history of the period to which these transactions refer will conduct us to the same conclusion. When we consider the great popularity attached to the ministry of the forerunner, and the general submission of the Jewish people to his doctrine, it is in the highest degree improbable that of the three thousand who were added by St. Peter to the church on one day, there were none who had been previously his disciples: this incredible supposition is reduced to an impossibility, when we recollect that of the twelve apostles two are actually affirmed by an evangelist to have been of that number. But as it is universally admitted that they who were savingly convinced of the truth of Christianity after the Pentecost were baptized on that occasion, what conclusion can be more inevitable, than that the rite administered by the harbinger of our Lord was essentially distinct from the Christian ordinance.

To conclude this branch of the subject: the Acts of the Apostles furnish us with a decisive instance of an apostle's rebaptizing certain disciples of John at Ephesus; but as we shall have occasion hereafter to examine that incident more fully, in reply to the evasions of the author of the *Plea*, I shall content myself at present with barely referring to it.

Such are the principal grounds on which we have ventured to assert the fundamental disparity between the baptism of John, and the Christian institute.

We now proceed to notice the manner in which the author of the *Plea for Primitive Communion* attempts to evade these arguments.

* Mark i. 15. † Luke x. 9.

I. He endeavours to invalidate the assertion that John's commission did not originate in the command of Christ, or that he, on any occasion, ascribes his mission to the Father, in distinction from the Son. The author of *Terms of Communion* is charged with representing "John as uniformly doing that of which there is no decisive evidence he ever did at all: that is, ascribe his commission to the Father, *in distinction from the Son.*"*

We should have supposed that when the origin of a certain proceeding is constantly assigned to one agent, and no notice is taken of another, there is no impropriety in affirming that the proceeding in question is ascribed to him who *is* mentioned, in distinction from him who is *not*. But let the Scripture speak for itself, and let the reader judge whether John did, or did not, ascribe his commission to the Father, in distinction from any other person. "He who sent me to baptize," said he, "the same said unto me, He on whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding on him, He it is who shall baptize in the Holy Ghost, and in fire."† Here the personage speaking distinguishes himself from the Messiah, as clearly as words can distinguish him, for he speaks of Christ in the third person, while he himself is denoted by the first; and so uniform is the language of Scripture on this subject, that not a syllable is to be found in which the mission of John is ascribed to any other person than the Father.

But to ascribe any operation whatever to the Father in distinction from the Son, this writer contends, is inconsistent with the belief of the ineffable union which subsists between those divine personages.‡ "Will those," he asks, "who believe the ineffable union of the Father and the Son be disposed to conclude from this text that John derived his authority from the Father, to the exclusion of the Son?" To which I reply, that believing firmly as himself that there is such a union subsisting between the personages in the blessed Godhead as constitutes them one living and true God, instead of inferring from thence the impropriety of distinguishing their operations, it has always appeared to me that the chief advantage resulting from the doctrine of the Trinity is, that it facilitates our conception of the plan of redemption, in which each of these glorious persons is represented as assuming distinct though harmonious offices and functions; the Father originating, so to speak, the Son executing, and the Spirit applying the several parts of that stupendous scheme. The Father, accordingly, is uniformly asserted to have sent the Son, the Son to have assumed the office of Mediator, and the Spirit to be imparted by both, to enlighten and sanctify the elect people of God. If we suffer ourselves to lose sight of such an application of the doctrine, it subsides into barren and useless speculation. And are we to be told that such is the ineffable union between the Father and the Son, that the distinct exercise of these functions is an impossibility? We should have supposed that the act of *sending*, at least, might be safely ascribed to the Father, in distinction from the Son; unless, perhaps, this author, in the plenitude of his subtlety, has discovered a method

* Plea for Primitive Communion, p. 21.
† John i. 33. See the original.
‡ Plea for Primitive Communion, p. 21.

by which a person may send himself. In spite of attempts to bewilder the plain reader by unmeaning obstructions, it will remain a palpable fact that John's commission is ascribed to the Father, and to him alone; and that having originated before our Saviour assumed the legislative function, it is in no respect entitled to be considered as a Christian institute. In addition to which we have only to remark, that to insist upon deriving John's mission from our Lord is to implicate him in the charge of employing a collusive mode of reasoning. In reproving the unbelief of the Jews, he observes that "he did not bear witness of himself;" for had he done so, "his witness had not been true:" in other words, not entitled to credit. But he adds, "there is another that beareth witness of me, and I know that which he witnesseth of me is true. Ye sent unto John, and he bore witness to the truth."* But if the person to whose testimony he appeals in proof of his mission was sent by himself, where is the force of this reasoning, or what difference in point of credibility is there between his bearing witness of himself, and his prompting another to do it for him?

II. The author of the *Plea* next endeavours to show the *identity* of the qualifications demanded by the forerunner of our Lord, with those which were demanded by his apostles after the day of Pentecost. After objecting to the accuracy of my statement on that article, without attempting to point out in what its incorrectness consists, he proceeds to remark, that, allowing it to be unexceptionably just, it will prove that the requisitions which were supposed to be different coalesce into one and the same thing. The reason he adduces is the following: "As both John and the apostles are described as demanding faith, so that faith is to have the same object, and to be connected with the same facts in relation to that object, only some of these facts John's disciples were to view as approaching; while the faith of those baptized by the apostles embraced them as having actually occurred; for the great events respecting the Messiah as boldly appealed to faith, when only occupying the prophetic page, as they do now they are become interesting details in the evangelical history."†

It will be freely admitted that the Saviour of the world is, in every period, and under every economy, the sole object of saving faith; but to infer from hence that the profession which John demanded was an appendage of the dispensation introduced on the day of Pentecost would equally demonstrate the Levitical ceremonies to belong to it, and would thus carry back the Christian dispensation to the time of Moses. The next assertion, "that the belief of the same facts was required in the former instance as in the latter," is palpably absurd, as well as the reason assigned, which is, that they were foretold by the ancient prophets, and "that prophecy as boldly appealed to faith as the narrative of the evangelist." Every one must perceive, that if there is any force in this argument, it will prove that *whatever* was predicted of the Messiah must have been distinctly understood and firmly embraced by the disciples of the forerunner, as an essential prerequisite to the reception of baptism; since whatever was thus predicted was unquestionably

* John v. 31–33. † Plea for Primitive Communion, p. 23.

presented as the object of faith; the place of his birth, his vicarious sufferings, his resurrection, the spiritual nature of his kingdom, his rejection by the Jews, and the triumphant progress of the gospel among the gentiles, with an infinite number of other particulars, were attested by the prophets. But will this author contend that all these circumstances were understood by John's converts, at a time when the immediate disciples of our Lord were intoxicated with the hopes of an earthly kingdom, and totally unapprized of their Master's death? Or will he condescend to inform us on what principle so much more was requisite to constitute a disciple of John than an apostle of the Lord? Had it been a question of duty, instead of an inquiry into matter of fact, no difficulty would have been felt in acknowledging the justice of the rebuke which the apostles received for their hardness of heart, in not opening their minds more freely to the true interpretation of Scripture. A cloud of carnal prejudices undoubtedly eclipsed a considerable portion of revealed truth; though, with the best dispositions, much must have remained obscure till the ancient prophecies were fulfilled. Previous to that period, if we listen to the inspired writers, instead of the author of the *Plea*, neither the prophets understood their own predictions nor the apostles their true interpretation. To apply revelation in its utmost extent, without the smallest allowance for the inevitable involutions of prophecy, as a criterion of the portion of knowledge actually possessed by the successive generations of the faithful, is a mode of reasoning peculiar to this writer. *We* possess in the Apocalypse a series of prophecies extending to the consummation of all things, a large portion of which is confessedly involved in obscurity; but what opinion should we entertain of the sagacity of him who, at a period subsequent to their accomplishment, should contend that we of this age must necessarily have been apprized of the events which they foretold, solely on the ground of their being the subject of prophecy? Such a reasoner will be the properest person to write a sequel to the *Plea for Primitive Communion*.

The author has been betrayed into these absurdities by confounding together two things totally distinct—a sincere belief in the truth of inspiration, with an explicit knowledge of its contents. The prophets were invested with credentials which entitled them to the profound submission of mankind; but to receive their predictions as the word of God is one thing, and so to penetrate their scope and intention as to be in possession of precisely the same facts, and acquainted with the same truths with those who lived to witness their accomplishment, is another. All good men equally possessing the former had the same *spirit* of faith; while, with respect to the latter, the situation of the hearers of the prophets under the law, and of the apostolic converts under the gospel, was most dissimilar. It is certain, from the eulogiums bestowed upon John, that his attainments in religious knowledge surpassed the highest of those of his predecessors; yet we are informed from the same authority that the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. But in what is this superiority, so universally ascribed to Christians, to be placed, except in an acquaintance with the facts attested after the

day of Pentecost, and a knowledge of the mysteries with which they are inseparably allied? These however form the very core and substance of the apostolical testimony, the unshaken profession of which was the indispensable condition of baptism; and among the foremost and most fundamental of these are the vicarious death and resurrection of our Lord, which we are compelled by their own testimony to believe were most remote from the previous expectation and belief of the apostles. Christian baptism is the "answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."*

In order to demonstrate the equality of the requisitions of John with those of the apostles, this writer has attempted to exhibit them in opposite columns. These columns, however, are not very majestic, nor very uniform, including only three passages on one side and four on the other. Two remarks may be amply sufficient to counteract the effect of a device which is addressed to the eyes rather than to the understanding. The first is, that the explicit testimony which the harbinger bore to the character of our Lord, after his baptism, is adduced without the slightest advertence to the distinction of times, as a proof of the manner in which he first announced his commission; but as his knowledge of the person of the Messiah, we learn from his own declaration, was subsequent to that event, his language must necessarily have been modified by that circumstance. The second is, that we have no more reason to suppose that *his* disciples comprehended the true import of his instructions, or that they interpreted them aright, than that the immediate disciples of our Lord understood similar declarations of their Master; from whom, we are infallibly certain, the sublimest part of his teaching was hid, until it was elucidated by events. And what but a blind attachment to hypothesis can obviate the suspicion that the followers of John were in the same predicament, unless we are prepared to affirm, either that they were the apter scholars, or had the more skilful master? As this writer lately applied the ample volume of prophecy as a criterion to ascertain the minimum, or lowest measure of knowledge requisite to constitute a disciple of John, so he now, with equal propriety, puts together all the scattered sayings of that great prophet, for the same purpose. If this be admitted in the case of the forerunner, it can with no consistency be withheld in the instance of our Lord; and by measuring the actual attainments of the apostles by the extent of his instructions, we shall find them little less enlightened and intelligent after his resurrection than they were before that event. The fact, however, is far otherwise.

It requires little penetration to perceive that the true method of ascertaining (as far as it is practicable) the essential qualifications of John's candidates is, not so much to consult detached sentences recorded of his ministry as the actual state of religious knowledge at that period, the known attainments of the apostles, and, above all, the language he is affirmed to have uttered at the moment he was celebrating his peculiar rite.

Whatever ideas he himself might affix to the terms "Lamb of God"

* 1 Peter iii. 21

and "Son of God," which it may not be easy exactly to determine, we may be certain that his followers did not comprehend their true import, because the apostles themselves were long after ignorant of the principal fact, or doctrine, denoted by the first of these appellations; and, therefore, to introduce these passages as this writer has done, with a design to insinuate that they conveyed to the mind precisely the same impression as at present, is to presume too much on the simplicity of the reader. He should have been aware, that few are so bereft of the power of recollection as to be incapable of detecting such flimsy sophistry.

Aware that confidence is contagious, he uniformly abounds in that quality in exact proportion to the weakness of his proofs. Of this the following passage exhibits an egregious example:—After surveying his columns with a complacency not unlike the restorer of Babylon, he triumphantly exclaims, "Even prejudice itself might be expected to acknowledge that so far from any material variation between John and the apostles, in introducing their respective candidates to baptism, they made a near approach to a syllabic agreement."*

To say nothing at present of the name of Jesus, a point we shall have occasion to discuss hereafter,—did John require of his candidates a profession of their belief in Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension? If he did, he was a superior teacher to his Master, and his disciples greater proficients than the apostles; a proposition which, however "boldly it may appeal to our faith," it is hard to digest. If, on the contrary, he acknowledges that a belief of these facts was *not* required by John as the condition of baptism, while it unquestionably was of the apostolic converts, what becomes of his syllabic agreement? and what temerity, not to say impiety, to represent these stupendous events, the death and resurrection of the Saviour, which involve the destinies of the human race, the incessant theme of the apostolic ministry, the basis of hope, the pillar, not the miserable columns of a page, but the column which props and supports a sinking universe, an affair of syllables, so that whether they are omitted or included, there exists a *syllabic agreement!*

Justly apprehensive of fatiguing the attention of the reader, the author cannot prevail on himself to dismiss this branch of the subject without bestowing a word more on the fallacious *medium* of proof employed in this instance by the writer of the *Plea.* Prophecy, he informs us, as "boldly appealed to faith" as history; from which the only legitimate inference is, that the disciple of revelation is as much under obligation to give implicit credit to the prophets as to the evangelists. *His* inference, however, is, that the precise measure of information yielded by the historian must of necessity be possessed by the student of prophecy; than which nothing is more absurd and untenable. To reason in this manner is, in the first place, to forget the prodigious disparity in point of perspicuity between the respective sources of information; and, secondly, in opposition to the decisive and repeated

* Plea for Primitive Communion, p. 24.

testimonies of inspiration, to presume that good men have uniformly exerted the ardour, impartiality, and diligence in the pursuit of truth to which it is justly entitled. Besides, when it is asserted that the prophetic page "as boldly appeals to faith as the details of evangelical history," an ambiguity lurks in the word *appeal*, as well suited to the purposes of sophistry as it is unfavourable to the enunciation of truth. It may either mean that it demands the *same credit* with historical details, or that it imposes an obligation to believe the same facts and to penetrate the same mysteries. In the former sense the assertion is true, but foreign to the purpose; in the latter it is palpably false; at once repugnant to the nature of things as well as to the plainest fact Many of the most important predictions were involved in a total ob scurity; others were designed to excite a vague but elevated expecta tion, without ascertaining the features of a future event; none were designed to make that clear and determinate impression upon the spirit which is effected by their accomplishment. From the necessary obscurity of prophecy, combined with the ignorance and prejudice which obstruct its operation, it is impossible, in any case, by appealing to a prediction to ascertain the sentiments entertained even by good men antecedently to its fulfilment. The only clew to conduct us in this inquiry is derived from the assertions of the evangelists, which as clearly confute the vain surmises and conjectures of this writer as if they had been recorded for that purpose.

The word *faith* to the illiterate reader is almost sure to suggest all the sentiments and ideas with which the gospel has made him familiar; and when we attempt to limit its objects by an impartial appeal to the actual state of religious knowledge before the coming of Christ, he feels himself confounded and amazed. His exclusive acquaintance with the present disqualifies him for transporting himself into past ages, and conceiving the ideas and sentiments prevalent in a situation so dissimilar. To do justice to the author of the *Plea*, it must be acknowledged he has shown no inconsiderable skill in availing himself of this prejudice.

What were the *precise views* entertained by the true Israel of the offices of the Messiah, and of the work of redemption previously to the Christian era, is one of the most curious and intricate questions of theology. Without attempting its solution, the writer of these lines may be permitted to remark that the Jewish belief was probably much more defective, and differed much further from the Christian, than has usually been suspected. The ignorance of the apostles till after the resurrection is a fundamental fact, a datum, which should never be lost sight of in this inquiry. It is not necessary, however, to assume it as a standard by which to regulate our estimate of every preceding degree of information. For when we recollect the long suspension of prophetic gifts in the Jewish church, the withdrawment of the Urim and Thummim, the extinction, in its sensible effects at least, of the theocracy, the intermixture of Jews and gentiles, inseparable from the introduction of a pagan government, the influence of oriental philosophy, the division of the people into sects, and the extreme profligacy and corruption of manners prevalent at the time of our Lord's nativity, it

will probably appear to have been the darkest period the church had experienced, resembling that portion of the natural day which immediately precedes the dawn, when the nocturnal light is extinguished and the reflection of a brighter luminary not commenced.

But with all the consideration due to these circumstances (and probably much is due), there is still reason to suspect that the average degree of knowledge which divines have been accustomed to ascribe to Jewish believers has been overrated. From the typical institution of piacular sacrifices, pointing to the *great propitiation*, it has been confidently concluded, that in them believers distinctly recognised the mystery of atonement by the blood of Christ. But supposing such to have been the fact, how shall we account for that doctrine occupying so small a portion of the succeeding prophecies; or for its so completely vanishing from the national creed, that the crucifixion of Christ afterward became a stumbling-block to the Jews, not less than foolishness to the gentiles? A doctrine so congenial to the feelings of penitent devotion, involving the primary basis of hope, had it once been embraced, would undoubtedly have been inculcated with the utmost care, and transmitted to the posterity of the faithful in uninterrupted succession, instead of being suffered to fall into such oblivion that at the time of the Saviour's advent, every trace of it had disappeared. While Christianity subsists, we entertain no apprehension of this great doctrine falling into neglect; its intrinsic evidence and importance will perpetuate it, unquestionably, amid all the fluctuations of systems and opinions; and, by parity of reason, its clear enunciation to the Jewish church must have been productive of similar effects.

If we read the ancient prophecies with attention, we shall perceive, that the atonement made by the Saviour is scarcely exhibited in a single passage, except in the fifty-third of Isaiah, with respect to which the Ethiopian eunuch was at a loss to determine whether the "prophet spoke of himself, or of some other man:" we shall perceive that in the practical and devotional books, such as the Psalms, the promise of pardon to the penitent, and of favour to the righteous, are expressly and repeatedly propounded, though with respect to the *medium* of acceptance a profound silence is maintained. But how this is consistent with the supposed knowledge of that medium it is not easy to discover. The habitual reserve on this subject maintained by the writers of the Old Testament, compared to its constant inculcation in the New, forms the grand distinction between these respective portions of revelation; clearly evincing the truth of the apostle's assertion, that the "way into the holiest was not made manifest" while the ancient sanctuary subsisted.

It will perhaps be replied, Are we then to renounce the notion of the typical nature of sacrificial rites, and, in contradiction to the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, to assert that they bore no reference to the great propitiation? Nothing is more foreign from the purpose of these remarks.

That the ceremonial law was a prefiguration of good things to come, and owed its validity and efficacy entirely to the analogy which it bore

to the *true sacrifice*, is placed beyond all reasonable controversy. All that is contended for is, that the reference which it bore was not understood during the subsistence of that economy; that it is not to be considered as an interpretation of the doctrine of the atonement, so much as a sort of temporary substitute for that discovery; and that it was a system of ciphers or symbols, the true interpretation of which was reserved to a future period. It is no more essential to the existence of a type that its import be understood before it is verified, than it is essential to prophecy that its just interpretation be comprehended before it is fulfilled. If we consider the benefit derived to the ancient church from prophecy in its strictest sense, we shall find it consisted, not in making men prophets, or enabling them to foretel future events, but rather in maintaining high and consolatory views of the providence and the attributes of God, accompanied with a firm but humble assurance of his gracious interposition in their concerns.

A general expectation of the Messiah's advent, as of some glorious and Divine personage, who would bestow the highest spiritual and temporal felicity, without descending to details, or foreseeing the *precise method* by which his interposition was to become effectual, appears to have nearly bounded the views of such as "waited for the consolation of Israel." Thus vague and general, at least, were the expectations of the faithful at the time of his appearance: to suppose they were ever materially different is a gratuitous supposition, totally devoid of proof.

In discussing this point, it is expedient to distinguish between the *fact* and the *doctrine* of the atonement. The aspect of the atonement of Christ considered as a *transaction*, is towards God; considered as a *doctrine*, towards man. Viewed in the former light its operation is essential, unchangeable, eternal—"He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Considered in the latter, its operation is moral, and therefore subject to all the varieties incident to human nature. The Cross, considered as the meritorious basis of acceptance, the only real satisfaction for sin, is the centre around which all the purposes of mercy to fallen man have continued to revolve: fixed and determined in the counsel of God, it operated as the grand consideration in the Divine mind, on which salvation was awarded to penitent believers in the earliest ages, as it will continue to operate in the same manner to the latest boundaries of time. Hence it is manifest that this great transaction could admit of no substitute. But that discovery of it which constitutes the *doctrine* of the atonement, though highly important, is not of equal necessity. Its moral impression, its beneficial effects on the mind, were capable of being secured by the institution of sacrifice, though in an inferior degree; while the offender, by confessing his sins over the head of the victim, which he afterward slew, distinctly recognised his guilt, his just exposure to destruction, and his exclusive reliance on Divine mercy.

By such elements of penitential sorrow and humble submission, accompanied with a general expectation of a Messiah, devout worshippers were prepared for the reception of the sublimer mysteries of the

gospel; and thus "the law became a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ."

When St. Paul asserts that the same law was a shadow of "good things to come, and not the very image of those things," he clearly intimates an essential difference between the two economies, and that the Mosaic did not afford that acquaintance with the method of pardon and reconcilement which constitutes the distinguishing glory of the gospel. But if the Levitical sacrifices instructed the pious Jew in the doctrine of vicarious atonement as it is now exhibited, they were already possessed of the substance, and the law could with no propriety be styled a schoolmaster intended to lead *them* to Christ, who had already arrived thither.

The passage to which we have already adverted, which affirms that the way into the holiest of all was not made manifest during the continuance of the first tabernacle, merits attentive consideration. From this and other similar passages, many of the fathers were led to infer that the souls of departed saints were not immediately received at death into the beatific vision, but waited for their future crowns till the general resurrection, while some of them were permitted to accompany our Saviour at his ascension, as trophies of his victory over the last enemy As this is a notion which it is probable few at present will be disposed to embrace, so it was the necessary result of interpreting the words in too absolute a sense, and of transferring to the *objects themselves* what may with more propriety be referred to the *conception* entertained of those objects. Chrysostom paraphrases the text by remarking that the way into the holiest, or into heaven, was (ἄβατος) inaccessible: St. Paul merely affirms that it was not made manifest. Distinct from these two interpretations it seems impossible to find a third: the words must either intend that the way itself was not opened, or that the knowledge of it was not communicated, which is equivalent to asserting that the doctrine of the vicarious sacrifice of Christ was reserved to be developed in a future day.

If the justice of these observations be admitted, the situation of Jewish believers will appear indeed to have been far removed from that of Christians, and the gospel dispensation will derive a prodigious accession of splendour from the comparison. It will be seen that they were "shut up," to use the language of inspiration, unto the faith to be revealed, that their state was comparatively gloomy, though not hopeless; and that they were upheld by general assurances of Divine mercy, confirmed by the acceptance of their offerings; while they possessed no clear and distinct conception of the way in which it would be displayed, or by what expedient its exercise could be rendered consistent with the immutable holiness and justice of the Divine nature.

"Ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbras."

Led by a way that they knew not, the obscurity with which they were surrounded must often have dismayed them; while the perturbation of conscience, on every recurrence of guilt, would clothe the last enemy

with new terrors, and deepen the shades which invest the sepulchre. Hence arose that language of despondency uttered by Hezekiah, David, and others, in the prospect of dissolution, together with the gloomy pictures which they frequently draw of the regions beyond the grave, natural to such as were "all their life, through fear of death, subject to bondage." Exposed to danger from which they knew no definite mode of escape, and placed on the confines of an eternity feebly and faintly illuminated, they had no other resource besides an *implicit* confidence in mysterious mercy.

But notwithstanding the extreme imperfection of their views, inasmuch as they *cordially* embraced the promises of God in the proportion in which they were then propounded, and cherished the expectation of a great Deliverer in the person of the Messiah, they possessed the spirit of faith. Genuine faith considered as a principle is characterized, not so much by the particular truths which it embraces, as by its origin, its nature, and its effects. When St. Paul describes the faith by which the elders obtained a good report, he refers not to the mysteries of the gospel, but specifies the persuasion that the worlds were made or created by the word of God, in opposition to the opinion that they were formed out of pre-existent matter, which universally prevailed in pagan philosophy. He also enumerates among its legitimate objects the belief "that God is, and that he is the rewarder of such as diligently seek him;" and whoever examines with attention the various examples which he adduces of the operation of that principle must be convinced that the idea of a vicarious propitiation is not absolutely essential to its nature, however necessary to salvation it has become, in consequence of the clear revelation of that doctrine.

Here then, in all probability, consists the peculiar glory of the gospel, in contradistinction from the economy of Moses, that it deciphers the figures of the law, accomplishes and absorbs every purpose of its sacrifices, and dispels the obscurity which concealed eternal realities, by placing in a refulgent light that great mystery, hid from ages and generations, "by which God can be just, and yet the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." Thus the rigour and reserve which, under the ancient economy, generated a spirit of bondage, is exchanged for the glorious liberty of the sons of God. But it is time to return from this digression, which, though not totally irrelevant to the subject, has diverted the author's attention longer than he intended from the writer of the *Plea*.

III. In my former treatise, the omission of the name of Christ in the baptism of John was urged in proof of its being distinct from the Christian ordinance; on the contrary, in the total absence of Scriptural evidence, my opponent contends that he not only baptized in the name of Jesus, but also in that of the holy Trinity. Supposing such to have been the fact, upon what principle can we account for the silence of the sacred writer on so important a particular? for that it was important, and would have contributed more to elucidate the nature and extent of his mission than all the circumstances combined which they have thought fit to record, will scarcely be denied. What similar example

occurs in the whole series of Scripture history, of a minute and detailed account of a religious ceremony, in which the mention of its most essential feature is suppressed; or who will believe, that while the minutest particulars respecting John were deemed worthy of being recorded, one so remarkable and unprecedented as that of his baptizing in the name of the Trinity was too trivial to be mentioned? a circumstance of much greater moment surely than his subsisting on locusts, or his being clothed with a girdle. But besides the silence of Scripture, which might of itself be deemed sufficiently decisive, the inconsistency of such a proceeding with the known reserve our Lord uniformly maintained respecting his messiahship, and his repeated charges to his disciples not to publish that fact, demonstrate the extreme improbability of his suffering himself to become the avowed object of a religious rite. The employment of his name for *such* a purpose, it is obvious, was equivalent to a public declaration of his being the Messiah, and must have defeated his known intention. In the publication *On Terms of Communion*, this argument was repeatedly insisted on, and pursued to such an extent of illustration, that we should have supposed it impossible it could either be misunderstood or misrepresented. What is the reply of the author of the *Plea* to this argument? One of the most extraordinary in the annals of controversy: it is neither more nor less than this, that though our Lord frequently enjoined secrecy as to the dignity of his divine character and the immediate object of his mission, there is not a single instance in which he manifested any delicacy as to his name.* He afterward proceeds to tell us with great gravity, that his name Jesus was as well known as that of Peter and John, and that he was addressed under that name equally by friends, enemies, and strangers. My reluctance to inflame this controversy with the language of exacerbation reduces me on this occasion to a perplexity how to express myself. Is it possible, let me ask, he could so far mistake the scope and bearing of the reasoning, as to confound the use of the term Jesus, as the proper name by which he was addressed in the ordinary intercourse of life, with the employment of it with that of the Father and the Holy Ghost in a holy sacrament? Or will he contend that to call a person by the name of Jesus, or by any other appellation whatever, is precisely the same thing as to baptize in his name? He who is capable of confounding things so essentially distinct is beyond the reach of reasoning: and if he did not confound them, but wished to put the change upon his readers, from a despair of being able to answer the argument, he has evinced a want of candour and good faith that merits the severest animadversion. Had his publication been a tissue of nonsense and stupidity throughout, we should have been strongly inclined to the former supposition; but when we reflect on the shrewdness which it occasionally displays joined to his care not to glance in the slightest manner to the true hinge of the controversy, it is difficult not to suspect the latter. It may be questioned whether another person could have been found acquainted with the English language, but would have instantly perceived that it was not the author's intention to insinuate a reluctance in our Lord to divulge his name, but the *fact* of his being the Messiah; and that it

* Plea for Primitive Communion, p. 27.

was the inseparable connexion of that fact with the practice of baptizing in his name which was the ground of my objection. As he has not made the slightest attempt to solve the difficulty, it would be trifling with the patience of the reader to attempt to re-enforce it.

IV. The different effects which accompanied baptism when performed by the apostles and by John were urged as a decisive proof that the two baptisms were essentially distinct, and characteristic of separate economies. To such a distinction our attention is invited by the forerunner, who affirmed himself to baptize in water only, but that "He that came after him should baptize in the Holy Ghost, and in fire." To this the author of the *Plea* replies by remarking "that the argument proceeds on incorrect data: it appears to assume that water baptism and the baptism of the Holy Ghost are the same; or that the latter invariably followed the former. It will no doubt be regarded as a remarkable incident, that in the midst of a zealous effort to separate between what is substantially the same, an attempt should be made to identify what is essentially different."*

After describing the baptism of the Holy Ghost as an effect which ordinarily accompanied immersion in the name of Christ, it will be deemed much more remarkable that the author should be accused of confounding them, or that he should be affirmed to have *identified* two things which stand to each other in the relation of cause and effect. If it be a fact that the communication of the Spirit usually accompanied the administration of baptism in the apostolic age, while no such communication was annexed to the ceremony of John, the author's position is correct. In proof of this fact, we have only to consult the Acts of the Apostles, which record the history of the first promulgation of the gospel. We there perceive that St. Peter held out the promise of the Spirit to the people, as a principal inducement to submit to the baptismal sacrament; and that when St. Paul found certain disciples at Ephesus who, though baptized, had not heard of those supernatural endowments, he expressed his surprise, saying, "Into what then were ye baptized?" a question totally irrelevant but upon the supposition that the reception of miraculous gifts was the stated appendage to that ordinance.

The only inquiry which can possibly arise on this subject is, whether John, in foretelling that the Messiah should baptize with the Holy Ghost, intended to allude to the sacramental water, or whether his attention was directed solely to the effusion of the Spirit, without reference to the external rite. This question, however, admits of easy decision, when we recollect that the corporeal rite was the usual preparative for the reception of spiritual gifts, that they were announced in immediate connexion with the act of baptizing, and that, though the ancient prophets almost universally foretold the abundant effusion of spiritual gifts and graces, which succeeded the advent of the Messiah, none before John made use of a figure which, viewed apart from the visible action with which it was associated, would have been scarcely intelligible. His suppression of the mention of *water* is in perfect accordance with the genius of oriental speech, which, in the exhibition of a complex object, is wont to represent it only by its boldest and most impressive feature

* Plea for Primitive Communion, p. 29.

It is not necessary to the support of this reasoning to assert that the communication of miraculous gifts *invariably* accompanied baptism: it is quite sufficient to account for the language of John, as well as to sustain the inference deduced from it, that such was the *stated* order. The instance of the Samaritans recorded in the eighth of the Acts is urged as an exception; but when attentively examined, it is none. We are informed, indeed, that though they were already baptized, "the Holy Ghost was fallen upon none of them;" not, however, because the gift of the Spirit did not usually accompany the administration of that rite, but because the apostles, to whom alone the power of conferring it belonged, were not present. The case of the apostles themselves, and of Cornelius, it is admitted, may be considered as exceptions. In the former instance the outward ceremony was superseded, as we apprehend, partly by the previous baptism of the Spirit, and partly by their having been converted to Christianity before the institution of that rite. In the latter, there was merely an inversion of the usual order: the Spirit was given prior to the administration of baptism, instead of succeeding it; but still they were closely conjoined in point of time, and sufficiently connected to justify the language of John.

To relieve the tediousness of the present discussion, let me here present the reader with a sample of the author's logic: "If these supernatural effects," he triumphantly remarks, "are invariably to follow immersion in water, in order to demonstrate that this is really Christian baptism, how is it they were copiously enjoyed by some who are supposed never to have received this institution?"* By an argument precisely similar, it were easy to demonstrate that the possession of reason is no essential ingredient in the constitution of human nature. For it might with equal propriety be urged, if such a principle enters necessarily into the definition of human nature, how is it that it is copiously enjoyed by beings (angels for example) who are supposed never to have received such a nature? This reply may be deemed amply sufficient for such a mode of reasoning: but in addition to this, let it be observed that it was neither asserted nor insinuated that miraculous gifts are invariably requisite to constitute Christian baptism; but simply that the fact of their accompanying it, when performed by the apostles, was held up by John as a striking feature in the new dispensation. And where is the absurdity of admitting that, without contending for its perpetuity, miraculous gifts sufficiently marked the *transition* from one economy to another; or that it is a peculiarity worthy of mention among the characteristics of a period denominated, in distinction from every preceding one, the dispensation of the Spirit?

V. Apprehensive of fatiguing the attention of the reader, we hasten to the last particular connected with this branch of the controversy, which is the decisive proof of the truth of my hypothesis, resulting from the fact that the disciples of John were *baptized* by St. Paul. As the author of the *Plea*, however, finds it necessary to contradict it, it will be proper to quote the whole passage, as it stands in the common translation, the accuracy of which no critic has impeached:—"And it came

* Plea for Primitive Communion, p. 30

to pass, that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus, and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied."* In examining this passage, with a view to the inquiry whether these men were baptized by St. Paul or not, it is the fifth verse which especially claims our attention. The question turns entirely on the interpretation of the following words:—"When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." These words must be understood either as the language of St. Paul or of Luke the historian. Our opponents contend that they are to be understood as a continuance of St. Paul's address, in which he describes the nature and effects of John's baptism. Upon this interpretation the passage last quoted has no relation to the disciples at Ephesus, except as it was intended for their instruction; it is descriptive, not of what befell those disciples, but of the general submission of the Jewish people to the rite administered by John. And as it is asserted in the next verse that St. Paul laid his hands upon *them*, and they received the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, we are led to a most extraordinary paradox, the assertion that St. Paul actually laid his hands, not on the persons mentioned at the beginning of the paragraph, but on that part of the Jewish people at large who had been baptized by John, to whom he also communicated prophetic gifts. But as this proposition is too hard even for the powerful digestion of our opponents, they are compelled to adopt another expedient, which is, to separate the relative pronouns in the last verse, and refer them, not to their immediate antecedent, but to a very remote one, at the distance of several verses. The only apology they make for this strange perversion of the language of inspiration is, that such interruptions of continuity are not uncommon, whereas we challenge them to produce a single instance of such a construction, not merely in the New Testament, but in the whole compass of Greek literature. Examples may possibly be adduced where the relative pronoun is connected with an antecedent equally remote, but none most assuredly where its relation to an immediate antecedent is so obvious, and so natural, that the true interpretation in opposition to that which presents itself at first sight becomes a perfect enigma. Were there difficulties arising on each side, we might be induced to acquiesce in a construction which, however unnatural or unusual, suggested the only consistent sense: but to have recourse to such a contrivance merely to avoid that construction, which is recommended by every rule of grammar, and against which not a shadow of objection lies, except its repugnance to hypothesis, is a proceeding at which liberal criticism must blush. If

* Acts xix. 1–6

such a mode of expounding Scripture were adopted on other occasions, it is difficult to say what absurdity might not be obtruded on the sacred volume. The manner in which the author of the *Plea* criticises the passage is such as might be expected from the advocate of so hopeless a cause. He neither ventures to quote it, nor to make the slightest remark on its principal clauses; but contents himself with putting a speech into the mouth of St. Paul, in which every thing runs perfectly smooth and easy; and since it is much easier to make speeches than to elucidate difficulties, or establish paradoxes, we commend his policy. His only remaining effort is confined to the introduction of a parallel passage; but unfortunately it turns out that his pretended parallel affords an example of as plain and obvious a construction of words as is to be found in the sacred pages. It is a passage which, instead of presenting a choice of difficulties, difficulties of *his* kind I mean, where grammar is on one side and hypothesis on the other, suggests a sense in which all mankind have acquiesced—a sense which no degree of stupidity can miss or artifice evade.* The only resemblance it bears to the portion of history under consideration is, that it relates a similar incident, where certain persons who had been baptized had not yet received the gifts of the Holy Ghost. To attempt the defence of a most unnatural interpretation of Greek words, not by an appeal to a passage which exhibits a similar peculiarity of construction, but merely a similarity of occurrence, is egregious trifling.

To the argument founded on the extreme improbability that none of the numerous converts on the day of Pentecost were previously disciples of John, no reply is attempted.

I cannot dismiss this subject without noticing the extreme deficiency of information respecting the history of religious opinions this author evinces, when he stigmatizes the sentiments advanced as a modern theory. They are so far from meriting that reproach, that they boast the suffrages of all the fathers, without exception, who have touched upon the subject; nor would it be easy to discover a single divine, previous to the Reformation, by whom they were not embraced; and since that period they have received the sanction of a Grotius, a Hammond, a Whitby, a Doddridge, a Chillingworth, and a multitude of other names of nearly equal celebrity. On an accurate inquiry, it will probably be found that the absurd interpretation of the passage we have just been considering, which is so necessary to the support of the opposite hypothesis, originated in the horror excited at the conduct of the Anabaptists at Munster, by which certain divines of the Reformation felt themselves strongly disposed to shun whatever might bear the semblance or colour of anabaptism; that, in short, the doctrine here advanced is the revival of an ancient, rather than the invention of a new, opinion.

To the sincere inquirer the antiquity or the novelty of a doctrine will appear a consideration of little moment, compared to the evidence

* This wonder-working passage is as follows:—"Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."—Acts viii. 14–17

by which it is supported; yet, as a natural prejudice exists against violent departures from the ancient course of interpretation, it is but just to endeavour as much as possible to disengage the cause of truth from this encumbrance.

The author of the *Plea* expresses a sort of horror at the thought of a plurality of baptisms, forgetting, it should seem, that the doctrine of *baptisms*, in the plural number, is placed by St. Paul among the first principles of the oracles of God. It is difficult to conceive to what baptisms he could refer, except those which are the subject of the present discussion: the baptism of the Spirit, which was the highest gift of God, could with little propriety be termed a doctrine, much less enumerated among the first principles of Christianity; and the Jewish washings constituted no part of that system.

Having presented the reasons on which the baptism of John was affirmed to be essentially distinct from the Christian ordinance at so much length, it is high time to relieve the attention of the reader by dismissing the subject.

There is one more observation, and one only, to which the author requests his attention. If we admit that the Jewish people were baptized in the name of Christ, considering the prodigious multitudes who repaired to John for that purpose, the conduct of a great part of that nation must be viewed in a new light; and instead of being chargeable with a uniform rejection of the Messiah, they must be considered as *apostates;* upon this supposition, they violated the most sacred engagements, and impiously crucified their Prince, after consecrating themselves to his service by the most awful solemnities. The evangelist informs us that "he came to his own, but his own received him not;" but the more accurate statement would have been, that they first received, and afterward rejected him; received him on the testimony of the forerunner, and rejected him after witnessing the immaculate purity of his life, the wisdom of his discourses, and the splendour of his miracles.

There is attached to apostacy a character of perfidy and baseness peculiar to itself—a species of guilt which the inspired writers frequently paint in the darkest colours; yet, strange to tell! though they had no motives to conceal or palliate the conduct of their countrymen, in their treatment of the Messiah, but many motives to the contrary, not a syllable escapes them of the charge of apostacy. What terrible energy would that accusation have lent to St. Peter's address! What unspeakable advantage for alarming their consciences would he have derived from reminding them of their baptismal vows, and of their unspeakable impiety in crucifying the divine Person to whom they had previously dedicated themselves in solemn rites of religion. When St. Paul in writing to the Thessalonians gives loose to one of his finest bursts of indignant feeling and rapid eloquence, in a brief portraiture of the character of his countrymen, the circumstance which would have given incredible force to the picture is suppressed; and not having perused the author of the *Plea*, he seems to entertain no suspicion of their having been baptized in the name of Jesus. It is not less unaccountable that the ancient prophets contain no allusion to this event, but

describe the future rejection of the Messiah as coeval with his appearance; and that the most singular fact in sacred history is neither the subject of narration nor of prophecy, but was reserved for the detection of the nineteenth century.

Having replied to this anonymous writer on every particular connected with the baptism of John, it is unnecessary to trouble the reader by animadverting on the other parts of his performance: the few observations it contains which are pertinent to the subject are too loose and superficial to deserve attention, especially since a work is announced by a writer who will probably discuss the remaining topics with superior ability. We shall notice only two circumstances, illustrative of the author's management of the controversy. He devotes his first section to a synopsis of the principles advanced in the treatise *On Terms of Communion;* which he has extended to the number of fourteen. Several of these, disguised by a little variety of language, are identically the same; some grossly misrepresented; and all of them expressed, not in the terms of the author, but in such as are adapted to give them as much of the air of paradox as possible. It is obvious that he who wishes to judge of them fairly must view them in their proper place, accompanied with their respective proofs and illustrations; and that to tear them from their connexion, and exhibit them in a naked form, though they had been expressed in the author's own terms, is a direct appeal to prejudice. The obvious design is to deter the reader at the outset, and to dispose him to prejudge the cause before it is heard. To mingle in the course of a controversy insinuations and innuendoes which have no other tendency than to impair the impartiality of the reader is too common an artifice; but such an open, barefaced appeal to popular prejudice is of rare occurrence. It is an expedient to which no man will condescend who is conscious of possessing superior resources. To this part of his performance no reply will be expected; for though the author feels himself fully equal to the task of answering his opponent, he confesses himself quite at a loss to answer himself. Like a certain animal in the eastern part of the world, who is reported to be extremely fond of climbing a tree for that purpose, he merely pelts the author with his own produce.

Another charge, however, is adduced of more serious import. For presuming to speak of conditions of salvation, he is accused of employing anti-evangelical language, and suspicions of his orthodoxy are pretty broadly insinuated. When the term *conditions* of salvation, or words of similar import, are employed, he wishes it once for all to be clearly understood that he utterly disclaims the notion of *meritorious* conditions, and that he intends by that term only what is necessary in the established order of means, a *sine qua non*, that without which another thing cannot take place. When thus defined, to deny there are conditions of salvation, is not to *approach* to antinomianism merely, it is to fall into the gulf. It is nothing less than a repeal of all the sanctions of revelation, of all the principles of moral government. Let the idea of *conditional* salvation, in the sense already explained, be steadily rejected along with the term, and the patrons of the worst of

heresies will have nothing further to demand. That repentance, faith, and their fruits in a holy life, supposing life to be continued, are essential prerequisites to eternal happiness, is a doctrine inscribed as with a sunbeam in every page of revelation; and must we, in deference to the propagators of an epidemic pestilence, be doomed to express by obscure and feeble circumlocutions a truth which one word will convey, especially when that word, or others of a precisely similar meaning, has been current in the productions of unquestionable orthodoxy and piety in every age? The author is at a loss to conceive on what principle, or for what reason, dangerous concessions are due to antinomianism; that thick-skinned monster of the ooze and the mire, which no weapon can pierce, no discipline can tame. If it be replied, Why adhere to an offensive term, when its meaning may be expressed in other words, or at least by a more circuitous mode of expression? the obvious answer is, that words and ideas are closely associated; and that, though ideas give birth to terms, appropriate terms become in their turn the surest safeguard of ideas, insomuch that a truth which is never announced but in a circuitous and circumlocutory form will either have no hold, or a very feeble one, on the public mind. The anxiety with which the precise, the appropriate term is avoided bespeaks a shrinking, a timidity, a distrust, with relation to the idea conveyed by it, which will be interpreted as equivalent to its disavowal. While antinomianism is making such rapid strides through the land, and has already convulsed and disorganized so many of our churches, it is not the season for half-measures; danger is to be repelled by intrepid resistance, by stern defiance, not by compliances and concessions: it is to be opposed, if opposed successfully, by a return to the wholesome dialect of purer times. Such is the intimate alliance between words and things that the solicitude with which the term *condition* and others of similar import have been avoided by some excellent men, has contributed more than a little to the growth of this wide-spreading pestilence. As almost every age of the church is marked by its appropriate visitation of error, so, little penetration is requisite to perceive that antinomianism is the epidemic malady of the present, and that it is an evil of gigantic size and deadly malignity. It is qualified for mischief by the very properties which might seem to render it merely an object of contempt—its vulgarity of conception, its paucity of ideas, its determined hostility to taste, science, and letters. It includes, within a compass which every head can contain and every tongue can utter, a system which cancels every moral tie, consigns the whole human race to the extremes of presumption or despair, erects religion on the ruins of morality, and imparts to the dregs of stupidity all the powers of the most active poison. The author will ever feel himself honoured by whatever censures he may incur through his determined opposition to such a system.

A REPLY

TO

THE REV. JOSEPH KINGHORN

BEING

A FURTHER VINDICATION OF THE PRACTICE

OF

FREE COMMUNION

"Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I, that I should withstand God?"—Acts xi. 17.

[PUBLISHED IN 1818.

PREFACE.

After announcing an intention of replying to Mr. Kinghorn, the public seem entitled to some account of the causes which have delayed its execution so long. Various conjectures have probably arisen on the subject. By many, no doubt, it has been suspected that the delay was occasioned by a perception of the difficulty of constructing an answer which would be deemed satisfactory, and that the engagement to reply was made without anticipating so formidable an opposition. That the author was, to a certain extent, deterred by a feeling of difficulty, it is impossible to deny; but the reader is probably not aware in what the difficulty lay. It had no relation to the argumentative force of Mr. Kinghorn's production, in whatever degree it may be supposed to possess that attribute, but solely to the manner in which he has chosen to conduct the debate. The perpetual recurrence of the same matter, the paucity of distinct and intelligible topics of argument, together with an obvious want of coherence, and of dependence of one part on another, give to the whole the air of a series of skirmishing and desultory attacks, rather than of regular combat; rendering it difficult to impart that order and continuity to a reply, in the absence of which argumentative discussions are insufferably tedious. With the eagerness of a professed pleader, he has availed himself of every topic which could afford the slightest colour of support to his cause, with little scrupulosity, apparently, respecting the soundness of the principles from which he argues. In a word, he has conducted his share of the warfare in a manner which renders him more formidable from the irregularity and quickness of his movements, than from the steady pressure of his columns.

Though he has advanced some new and, as they appear to me, paradoxical positions, the space which they occupy is so small, compared to that which he has allotted to arguments and objections distinctly noticed and replied to in my former treatise, that it seemed almost impracticable to answer the greater part of the work without a frequent recurrence to what had been already advanced. But a writer is never more certain of disgusting than when he is the echo of himself.

On these accounts, had my private conviction dictated the course which it seemed proper to pursue, the following work, instead of swelling to its present bulk, would have been limited to some short strictures on those parts of his reply in which my respectable opponent has quitted the track of his predecessors. But to this there were serious

objections. In the estimation of multitudes, little qualified to appreciate the weight of an argument, to be brief and to be superficial are one and the same thing; no publication is admitted to be solidly answered, except the reply bears a certain proportion to it in size and extent; and whatever is not distinctly noticed and discussed, however irrelevant, or however trivial, is instantly proclaimed unanswerable. These considerations determined me rather to hazard the imputation of tediousness, than to attempt a very concise reply, which, however cogent, would be construed by many into a tacit acknowledgment of my incapacity to combat the reasoning of my opponent. Having, therefore, only a choice of evils, and necessitated either to make a large demand on the patience of the reader, or to incur the suspicion of evading what could not be successfully encountered, I preferred the former; endeavouring at the same time to shun, as much as possible, a tiresome repetition of the same topics; with what success the public will determine.

The preceding remarks will explain one cause of delay; to which may be added, a strong disinclination to controversy, the want of a habit of composition, repeated attacks of illness at one period, and various avocations and engagements at another, too unimportant to be obtruded on the attention of the reader.

It may also be remarked, in extenuation of the charge of procrastination, that the subject is just as interesting and important as when the controversy commenced. The evil in which it originates is not local, nor of an ephemeral or transitory nature: it will continue to subsist, there is reason to fear, after the present generation is consigned to the dust; and even the delay may not be altogether without its advantages. Both parties will have had leisure to reflect, the reasoning on each side of the question time to settle, and to find its level in the public mind, undisturbed by that disposition extravagantly to depreciate and to extol respectively the performances it has given rise to, which almost invariably distinguishes the outset of a controversy. Whatever appears in the present stage, it is but justice to consider as the result of more matured observation and inquiry, compensating in pertinence and solidity what it may want in vivacity and ardour.

It is remarkable, that without any previous knowledge or concert, a discussion on the subject of communion commenced nearly at the same time on both sides the Atlantic; and the celebrated Dr. Mason of New-York, justly regarded as one of the brightest ornaments of the western hemisphere, was exerting the energies of his most powerful mind in establishing the fundamental position of the treatise *On Terms of Communion*, almost at the very moment that treatise appeared. A coincidence so rare, a movement so simultaneous, yet so unpremeditated, we cannot but look upon as a token for good, as an indication of the approach of that period, so ardently desired by every enlightened Christian, when genuine believers will again be of "one heart and of one mind." Let us hope that America, the land of freedom, where our pious ancestors found an asylum from the oppression of intolerance, will exert, under the auspices of such men as Dr. Mason, a powerful reaction on the parent state, and aid her emancipation from the relics of

that pestilential evil still cherished and retained in too many British churches.

Independent of other considerations, that invaluable person possesses one obvious advantage over the author of the following performance. Disengaged from the spurious refinements and perplexing subtleties which arise from the subject of baptism, by which our opponents attempt to evade the application of his general principle, his movements are in consequence more free and unfettered, and his force operates in a more simple direction than is compatible with the state of the question as it respects the views of the Baptist denomination. He fearlessly spreads his sails to the winds, and triumphs on the element which is congenial to the amplitude and grandeur of his mind. Mine is a coasting voyage, in which the author feels himself necessitated to creep along the shore, and to comply with all its irregularities, in the midst of flats and shoals, and exposed to perpetual annoyance from the innumerable small craft which infest these shallow waters. The effect of the different situations in which we are placed is to give a luminous simplicity to his mode of conducting the argument, which forms a striking contrast, not only to the tedious logomachies which I have been compelled to encounter,* but the manner in which I have attempted to confute them. It belongs to a Pascal, and perhaps to a few others of the same order of genius, to invest the severest logic with the charms of the most beautiful composition, and to render the most profound argumentation as entertaining as a romance. The author makes no such pretension: having confined his endeavours to an attempt to establish his assertions by sufficient proof, and to expose the sophistry of his opponent, he must be allowed to remind his readers that no quality will be found more necessary than patience. Truth, as far as he knows himself, is his sole object; and if they are actuated by the same disposition, though they will find little to amuse, it is possible they may meet with something to instruct them.

It is surprising how little attention an inquiry into the principles which ought to regulate our intercourse with other denominations (a question of considerable moment, in whatever light it be viewed) has excited. Though it has given birth to a few publications, at very distant intervals, none, as far as my information extends, have produced any deep impression, or any extensive and permanent effects. On this subject, a spirit of slumber seems to have oppressed our faculties, from which we have hardly ever completely awoke. From the appearance of Mr. Bunyan's treatise, entitled *Water Baptism no Bar to Communion*, to the publication of the celebrated Mr. Robinson, a whole century elapsed, with few or no efforts to check the progress of the prevailing system, which had gained so firm a footing previous to Mr. Booth's writing, that he felt no scruple in entitling his defence of that practice *An Apology for the Baptists*. The majority appear to have carried it with so high a hand, that the few churches who ventured to

* Though Dr. Mason was not led by the course of his argument to treat of the question of *mixed communion*, in the usual import of that phrase, his general principle not only necessarily infers it, but I have the satisfaction of learning from his own lips his entire approbation of the doctrine advanced in *Terms of Communion*

depart from the established usage were very equivocally acknowledged to belong to the general body, and seem to have been content to purchase peace at the price of silence and submission. The most virulent reproaches were cast upon the admirable Bunyan, during his own time, for presuming to break the yoke; and whoever impartially examines the spirit of Mr. Booth's Apology will perceive that its venerable author regards him, together with his coadjutors and successors, much in the light of rebels and insurgents; or, to use the mildest terms, as contumacious despisers of legitimate authority. Mr. Kinghorn, in the same spirit, evinces an eagerness, at every turn, to dispute our title to be considered as complete Baptists. In short, whether it is to be ascribed to intimidation, or to some other cause, the fact is notorious that the zeal evinced on the side of free communion has hitherto borne no proportion to that which impels the advocates of the opposite system, whose treatment of their opponents, in most instances, bears no very remote resemblance to that which moderate churchmen are accustomed to receive at the hands of their high church brethren.

Another cause has probably co-operated towards the production of the same result. Some whose character commands the deepest respect are known to deprecate the agitation of the present controversy, from an apprehension of the injury the denomination may sustain by the exposure of its intestine dissensions. For my own part, I am at a loss to conceive the grounds on which such a policy can be justified. Could the fact that we are at variance among ourselves on the subject under discussion be concealed, something might be urged in favour of the prudence of such a measure, nothing certainly for its magnanimity. But since that is impossible, and whoever is acquainted with the state of the denomination is aware of the diversity which subsists in the constitution of our churches in this particular, the true state of the question is, whether that article of the Apostles' Creed which asserts *the communion of saints* is to be merged in an exclusive zeal for baptism, and its systematic violation, in our judgment at least, to remain unnoticed and unchecked, in deference to party feelings and interests. We are at a loss to conceive how the association of truth with error is capable of benefiting the former; or how it can be eventually injured by an attempt (conducted in a Christian spirit) to dissolve an alliance which resembles the junction of the living with the dead. While the preservation of peace is dear to us, the interests of truth are still more so; and we would fix our eyes on the order in which the attributes of that celestial wisdom are enumerated, which is "*first* pure, then peaceable."

Before closing this preface, I must be allowed to advert to a circumstance intimately connected with the eventual success of the cause in which I am embarked. It is the general practice of our churches, whatever may be the sentiments of the majority, to continue the practice of strict communion, in almost every instance where the opposite system is incapable of being introduced with a perfect unanimity; in consequence of which it frequently happens that the constitution of the church continues to sanction strict communion, while the sentiments of a vast

majority of its members are decidedly in favour of a contrary system: and in opposition to the usage which obtains on other occasions, the private sentiments of the few are made to regulate and control the conduct of the many. Where, it may be asked, is the propriety, where the justice of such a mode of proceeding? Whatever respect may be due to the conscientious, though erroneous scruples of an upright mind, it is not easy to perceive why these should be permitted to prescribe to the better judgment of those whom *we* must necessarily consider as more enlightened.

As the majority, convinced, as they are supposed to be, of the right of all genuine Christians to communion, must necessarily regard the dissentients as being in error, it deserves to be considered in what manner error ought to be treated. Ought it to be the object of toleration, or should it be invested with dominion? Surely all it can reasonably claim is the former; but when, in deference to it, the far greater part of a society refrain from acting agreeably to their avowed principles, and consent to withhold from another class of their fellow-christians what they consider as their undoubted right, they cannot be said merely to tolerate the error in question; no, they in reality place it on the throne—they prostrate themselves before it. Yet, strange as it may appear, such is at present the conduct of Baptist societies. While there remains the smallest scantling of members averse to open communion, the doors, in compliance with their scruples, continue shut, and Pedobaptist candidates, however excellent, or however numerous, are excluded.

Thus the intolerance of one class of Christians is not only indulged, but pampered and caressed, while the religious profession of another is treated as a nullity. The incongruity of this mode of proceeding is also extremely obvious in another view. The admission of members in our societies, it is well known, is determined by a majority of suffrages, where the minority is expected, and that most reasonably, quietly to acquiesce in the decision of the majority. But in the case under present consideration, where strict communion is practised in a church the majority of whose members are of a contrary persuasion, the eligibility, not of an individual, but of a whole class of individuals, to an indefinite extent, is virtually determined by the judgment of the smaller, in opposition to the larger party.

The injustice of such an arrangement will perhaps be admitted; but how, it will be asked, can it be remedied? Would it be proper to exclude such as feel it impossible, with a good conscience, to commune with Pedobaptists, in order to make room for the latter? Nothing is more remote from our intention. Without inflicting the slightest wound on those amiable and exemplary persons who scruple the lawfulness of that measure, the remedy appears equally simple and obvious.

Whenever there is a decided majority in a church whose views are in unison with those which we are attempting to recommend, let them throw down the barriers, and admit pious Pedobaptists without hesitation; and let those whose principles deter them from joining in such a communion receive the Lord's Supper apart, retaining, at the same time, all their rights and privileges unimpaired. By this simple expedient,

the views of all the parties will be met; the majority will exert their prerogative, and act consistently with their avowed principles; the Pedobaptists will obtain their rights; and the abetters of strict communion will enjoy that state of separation and seclusion which they covet. By this means a silent revolution may be effected in our churches, unstained by a particle of violence or of injustice. But while the present plan is pursued, while we are waiting for the last sands of intolerance to run out, the domination of error and injustice may be prolonged to an interminable period, since, of all creatures, bigotry is the most tenacious of life.

Sudden and violent reformations are not only seldom lasting, but the mischief which results and the disgust they excite often produce a reaction, which confirms and perpetuates the evil they attempt to eradicate. For this reason, great prudence and moderation are requisite in every effort to meliorate the state of public bodies. He who aspires to remove their prejudices must treat them with tenderness and respect, urging them to no step for which they are not fully prepared by a mature and widely-extended conviction of its propriety; for no innovations, however desirable in themselves, will be permanently beneficial, the stability and perpetuity of which are not guarantied by the previous illumination of those by whom they are adopted.

Having devoted more time and attention to the present controversy already than many are disposed to think it entitled to, it is by no means my intention to renew it, conceiving it a contemptible ambition to determine to have the last word, which is nothing less than to aspire at a pre-eminence in pertinacity. Resting with perfect confidence on the truth and, consequently, on the ultimate triumphs of the principles which I have attempted to defend, the detection of incidental mistakes and the exposure of minor errors will not disturb my repose, however justly they may awaken a feeling of regret that the powers of the advocate were not more commensurate with the merits of the cause.

If the author has been on any occasion betrayed, in the ardour of debate, into language which the reader may deem disrespectful to his opponent, it will give him real concern. He knows none whose character entitles him to higher esteem; nor is he insensible to the value of those expressions of personal regard with which Mr. Kinghorn has honoured him, nor of that general mildness and urbanity which is at once the character of his mind and of his performance. Aware of the tendency of controversy to alienate the parties from each other who engage in it, it is matter of regret, on that account, and on that only, that it was my lot to meet with an antagonist in Mr. Kinghorn. In every other respect, it is a fortunate circumstance for the cause of truth; for while his temper affords a security from that virulence and those personalities which are the opprobrium of theological debate, his talents ensure his doing justice to his cause, perhaps beyond any other person of the same persuasion. A very different performance, in many respects, was anticipated, it is true; nor could the extraordinary assertions, not to say adventurous paradoxes he has hazarded, fail to excite surprise: although his character exempts him from the suspicion of that arrogance

and conceit in which they usually originate. They are rather to be ascribed to a dissatisfaction (which he dares not pretend to conceal) with former apologists; and a determination, if possible, to compass the same object by a different route. The intelligent reader will probably be of opinion, that he has attempted to give an air of originality to what was not susceptible of it; and that, aiming to enrich and support a most meager and barren thesis by new arguments, he is reduced to the same necessity as the Israelites, of "making bricks without straw."

Having already made the porch too large for the building, one additional remark only is submitted to the attention of the reader, previous to his entrance on the following discussion. The little success which has attended our exhibition of the doctrine of baptism, continued now for many generations, deserves the serious consideration of every intelligent Baptist. With all our efforts, with all the advantage of overwhelming evidence (as appears to me) in favour of our sentiments, the prospect of their reception by dissenting communities (to say nothing of established churches, where there are peculiar impediments to be encountered) is as distant as ever: and it may be doubted whether, since the recent revival of religion, our progress is in a fair proportion to that of other denominations. It may be possible to assign the second causes of this remarkable event; but as second causes are always subservient to the intentions of the first, it deserves our serious consideration whether we are not labouring under the sensible frown of the great Head of the church; and "is there not a cause?" A visible inferiority to other Christians in zeal and piety will scarcely be imputed; nor have we been left destitute of that competent measure of learning and talent requisite to the support of our doctrines. The cause of our failure, then, is not to be looked for in that quarter. But though we have not "drank with the drunken," if we have unwittingly "beaten our fellow-servants," by assuming a dominion over their conscience; if we have severed ourselves from the members of Christ, and under pretence of preserving the purity of Christian ordinances, violated the Christian spirit; if we have betrayed a lamentable want of that "love which is the fulfilling of the law," by denying a place in our churches to those who belong to the "church of the first-born," and straitening their avenue, till it has become narrower than the way to heaven; we may easily account for all that has followed, and have more occasion to be surprised at the compassionate Redeemer's bearing with our infirmities, than at his not bestowing a signal blessing on our labours.

PART I.

THE FUNDAMENTAL POSITION; OR, THE SUPPOSED NECESSARY CONNEXION BETWEEN THE TWO POSITIVE INSTITUTES OF CHRISTIANITY EXAMINED.

CHAPTER I.

Remarks on Mr. Kinghorn's Statement of the Controversy.

Perfectly concurring in opinion with Mr. Kinghorn, that it is of importance that the point in debate be fairly stated, a few remarks, designed to show in what respects his statement is inaccurate or defective, will not be deemed irrelevant. He justly observes, that the question, and the only question, is, whether those who are *acknowledged to be unbaptized ought to come to the Lord's table.* After stating the sentiments of the Pedobaptists, he proceeds to observe that the "Baptists act on a different plan; they think that baptism ought to be administered to those only who profess repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and that it should be administered to them on such profession by immersion. And then, and not before, they consider such persons properly qualified, according to the New Testament, for the reception of the Lord's Supper." The last position, Mr. Kinghorn is aware, is not maintained by the Baptists as such, but by part of them only: it may be doubted whether it be the sentiment of the majority. Why then identify the advocates of strict communion with the body, as though the abetters of a contrary practice were too inconsiderable to be mentioned, or were not entitled to be considered as Baptists?

It is but just, however, to remark, that this disposition to enlarge the number of his partisans is not peculiar to this writer. Mr. Booth, when engaged in defending a thesis about which the Baptists had long been divided, chose, in the same spirit, to denominate his performance *An Apology for the Baptists.**

Our author proceeds to observe, "Here arises a controversy between the two parties, not only respecting baptism, but also respecting their conduct to each other on the subject of communion." Where, let me ask, are the traces to be found of this imaginary controversy between Baptists and Pedobaptists on that subject? That they have been often engaged in acrimonious disputes with each other on the point of baptism is certain; but of the history of this strange debate about terms of communion the public are totally ignorant. What are the names of the

* Who would expect to find that a book entitled *An Apology for the Baptists* chiefly consists of a severe reprehension of the principles and practices of a respectable part of that body?

parties engaged, and to what publications did it give birth? This author had informed us at the distance of a few lines, that the Pedobaptists in general believe that none ought to come to the Lord's table who are not baptized. If this is correct, we may indeed easily conceive of their being offended with us for deeming them unbaptized; but how our refusal to admit them to communion should become the subject of debate is utterly mysterious. Did they, in contradiction to the fundamental laws of reasoning, attempt to persuade us to act in contradiction to the principles agreed upon by both parties? The supposition is impossible. The truth is—nor could the writer be ignorant of it—that the dispute respecting communion existed in our own denomination, and in that only.

An attempt is made to represent the advocates of mixed communion as divided among themselves, and as resting the vindication of their conduct on opposite grounds. In stating their views, Mr. Kinghorn observes, "that as their Pedobaptist brethren think themselves baptized, they are willing to admit them on that ground, since they do not object to baptism itself, but only differ from others in the circumstances of the ordinance."

"Some," he adds, "lay down a still wider principle, that baptism has no connexion with church communion; and that in forming a Christian church, the question ought not to be, Are these Christians who wish to unite in church-fellowship *baptized*, whatever that term is considered as meaning—but, Are they, as far as we can judge, real Christians?"*

Of this diversity in the mode of defending our practice the writer of these pages confesses himself totally ignorant: and whatever prejudices our cause may sustain, it has not yet been injured by that which results from intestine dissension. Different modes of expression may have been adopted by different writers, but a perfect accordance of principle, a coincidence in the reasons alleged for our practice, has pervaded our apologies. We have not, like our opponents, professed to take new ground:† we have not constructed defences so totally dissimilar as the publications of a Booth and a Kinghorn, where the argument which is placed in the very front by the former is by the latter abandoned as untenable. It is easy to perceive that the alleged disagreement in our principles is a mere phantom. While we universally maintain the nullity of infant baptism, the persuasion which our Pedobaptist brethren entertain of their being baptized can never be mistaken for baptism, and they, consequently, cannot be received in the character of baptized persons. Our constant practice of administering immersion to such, on a change of sentiment, would on that supposition convict us at once of being Anabaptists. It is not then under any idea that they have really partaken of that ordinance, more than the people called Quakers, that we admit them to our communion; but in the character of sincere, though mistaken Christians, who have evinced, even with respect to the particular in which we deem them erroneous, no disposition to treat a Christian rite with levity or neglect: and if there are those who would

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 11, 12.

† "The reader who is acquainted with the *Apology for the Baptists*, written by the late venerable Abraham Booth, will find that in the following pages I have taken ground somewhat different from his. I have adopted rather a different mode of defence."—*Baptism a Term of Communion*, p 8

refuse to commune with such as reject the ordinance altogether, it is because they suspect them of such a disposition. As there can be no degrees in nothing, they are not so weak as to suppose that one class is in reality more *baptized* than the other; but one is supposed to mistake the nature of an institute, which the other avowedly neglects. In this case he who is prepared to believe that the omission of Christian baptism from a notion of its not being designed for perpetuity may consist with that deference to divine authority which is essential to a Christian, will receive both without hesitation: he who is incapable of extending his candour so far will make a distinction; he will admit the Pedobaptist, while he rejects the person who purposely omits the ceremony altogether. Whichever measure we adopt, we act on the same principle, and merely apply it with more or less extent, according to the comprehension of our charity. If we supposed there were a necessary, unalterable connexion between the two positive Christian institutes, so that none were qualified for communion who had not been previously baptized, we could not hesitate for a moment respecting the refusal of Pedobaptists, without renouncing the principles of our denomination. On the other hand, if among such as are supposed to be equally unbaptized we admit some and reject others, this difference must be derived, not from the consideration of baptism, but of personal character; in other words, from our supposing ourselves to possess that evidence of the piety of the party accepted which is deficient in the other. Hence it is manifest that nothing can be more simple and intelligible than the principles on which we proceed, which are of such a nature as to preclude every other diversity of opinion, except what regards their application in particular instances.

He who mistakes the nature of a positive institute is in a different predicament of error from him who avowedly rejects it altogether; the imperfection which claims toleration in our Pedobaptist brethren is different in its nature from that which attaches to such as are disposed to set the ordinance aside. It is very possible, therefore, that some may be willing to extend their indulgence to what appears to them the *least* of two errors, while they refuse toleration to the greater; and, on this ground, admit a Pedobaptist, while they scruple to receive him who does not even profess to be baptized. But in making such a distinction, no intelligent Baptist would be moved by the consideration of one of these parties being baptized and the other not (for this would be admitting the validity of infant baptism), but solely by the different estimate he made of the magnitude of the respective errors. Some would probably consider each of them consistent with a credible profession of Christianity; others might form a less favourable judgment. In this case the parties would act differently, while they maintained the same principle, and adjusted their practice by the same rule.*

* The above remarks may enable the reader to judge of the justice with which Mr. Kinghorn asserts, or insinuates, our total disagreement respecting the fundamental principle on which we justify our practice. "Among the Baptists," he says, "who plead for mixed communion, I apprehend few will be found who would fairly take Mr. Hall's principle in all its consequences. In general, they palliate, and plead that many good men think themselves baptized, and they are willing to accept them on that footing, leaving it to their own consciences to decide whether they had received such baptism as the word of God required; and they will hardly admit the possibility of any case occurring

It is somewhat extraordinary, that after stating the principle on which my treatise on Communion was founded, Mr. Kinghorn makes his first appeal to the Pedobaptists, and asks whether they are prepared to acknowledge that baptism and the Lord's Supper have no connexion. To what purpose is a question referred to a class of persons who as far as concerns the interior regulation of their churches, have no interest in the inquiry, on whose practice it can have no influence, and who are supposed by both the parties concerned to be in an error respecting the institution itself, which has given occasion to the discussion? The confidence with which he anticipates their favourable suffrage appears however to be ill founded; and if the *Evangelical Magazine* for 1803 is supposed to have insinuated sentiments congenial with his own, the author of the review of the present controversy, in the same publication, distinctly and explicitly expressed his approbation of the treatise *On Terms of Communion*. I have no doubt the result of an accurate and extensive inquiry into the prevailing sentiments of such as adhere to infant baptism would be found opposed to his doctrine; and that such of them as might object to the admission of a member avowedly unbaptized would be actuated by the consideration of the *magnitude of the error*, and not by the conviction of a specific and essential connexion between the two ordinances in question. In other words, they would decide on the case upon principles common to the advocates of mixed communion.

His pretence for calling in such a host of disputants is that he may "clear the field," which, in my humble opinion, will be best accomplished by confining the debate within its proper limits; regarding it, agreeably to its true nature, as a controversy which concerns our own denomination alone, without attempting to extort a verdict from persons who have not been placed in a situation to invite their attention to the subject. Fortunately for them, they are under no temptation to treat their fellow-christians with indignity; whether they would have maintained the stern inflexibility which is prepared to sacrifice the communion of saints to an unfounded hypothesis must be left to conjecture. We indulge a hope that they would have hesitated long ere they admitted a doctrine which draws after it such consequences; that they would have judged of the tree by its fruits, and have discovered some better mode of signalizing their allegiance to Christ than by the excision of his members. The tenet to which we are opposed produces an effect so contrary to what the genius of the gospel teaches us to anticipate, and so repugnant to the noblest feeling of the heart, as to form

which should require their acting on a wider principle. And here also, as far as my knowledge and observation have extended, I believe the cases are *very few* in which the position would be fairly and boldly adopted, that Christian communion ought to be held with those who deny altogether the obligation to attend to Christian baptism."—p. 15. My opportunities of knowing the sentiments of the liberal part of the Baptists must be supposed to be at least equal to Mr. Kinghorn's; yet I have not heard a single objection from them against the general principle. Exceptions have been made (as might be expected) to particular parts, but none whatever to the fundamental position of the treatise The reason he assigns for supposing that many would not adopt the general principle in its full extent is inconclusive. To refuse the communion of such as denied the obligation of baptism altogether, providing that error was deemed of such magnitude as to induce a suspicion of the piety of the party would not be to contradict the principle in the smallest degree; and I am persuaded that among the advocates of mixed communion the refusal would proceed on no other ground. It is one thing to reject a general principle, and another to differ about the application of it to particular cases

a presumption against it which nothing can surmount but the utmost force and splendour of evidence. How far it is from possessing such support, or even that preponderation in the scale of argument which would produce conviction on the most trivial subject, it is the business of the following sheets to inquire.

In deciding the question, whether persons whom we deem unbaptized are entitled to approach the Lord's table, we must examine the connexion subsisting between the two positive ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Our opponents contend that there is *such a connexion* between these as renders them inseparable; so that he who is deemed unbaptized is, *ipso facto*, apart from any consideration whatever of the cause of that omission, disqualified for approaching the sacred elements. *We* contend that the absence of baptism may disqualify, and that it does disqualify, wherever it appears to proceed from a criminal motive; that is, wherever its neglect is accompanied with a conviction of its divine authority. In this case we consider the piety of such a person at least as doubtful; but when the omission proceeds from involuntary prejudice or mistake, when the party evinces his conscientious adherence to known duty by the general tenor of his conduct, we do not consider the mere absence of baptism as a sufficient bar to communion. On this ground we cheerfully receive pious Pedobaptists, not from the supposition that the ceremony which they underwent in their infancy possesses the smallest validity, but as sincere followers of Christ: and for my own part, I should feel as little hesitation in admitting such as deny the perpetuity of baptism, whenever the evidence of their piety is equally clear and decisive.

It is apparent that the whole controversy turns on the *connexion* between the two positive institutes; and that in order to justify the conduct of our opponents, it is not sufficient to evince the authority or perpetuity of each, and the consequent obligation of attending to both: it is necessary to show the dependence of one upon the other; not merely that they are both clearly and unequivocally enjoined, but that the one is prescribed with a *view to the other*.

There are two methods by which we may suppose this to be effected; either by showing their inherent and intrinsic dependence, or by making it appear that they are connected by *positive law*. Between ritual observances it is seldom if ever possible to discover an inherent connexion; in the present case it will probably not be attempted. If the advocates of exclusive communion succeed, it must be in the last of these methods; it must be by proving, from express declarations of Scripture, that baptism is an invariable and essential prerequisite to communion. A Jew would have found no difficulty in establishing this fact respecting circumcision and the passover: he would have immediately pointed to the book of Exodus, where we find an express prohibition of an uncircumcised person from partaking of the paschal lamb. Let some similar evidence be adduced on the present subject—let some declaration from Scripture be exhibited which distinctly prohibits the celebration of the Lord's Supper by any person who, from a misconception of its nature,

has omitted the baptismal ceremony, and the controversy will be at rest The reader can scarcely be too often reminded that this is the very hinge of the present debate, which (as appears from the title of his pamphlet) Mr. Fuller clearly perceived, however unsuccessful he may have been in establishing that fundamental position. Much that Mr Kinghorn has advanced will be found to be totally irrelevant to the inquiry in hand; and in more instances than one the intelligent reader will perceive him to have made concessions which are destructive of his cause. But let us proceed to a careful investigation of the arguments by which he attempts to establish the aforesaid *connexion.*

CHAPTER II.

His Attempt to establish the Connexion contended for, from the Apostolic Commission and Primitive Precedent.

My respectable opponent commences this branch of the argument by quoting the apostolic commission, justly remarking, that whatever may be thought of John's baptism, the ceremony enjoined in that commission must belong, in the strictest sense, to the Christian dispensation. The commission is as follows:—"Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. Or, as it is recorded in Luke—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved." "This," Mr. Kinghorn observes, "is the *law;* the Acts of the Apostles are a commentary on that law; not leaving us to collect from mere precedents what ought to be done, but showing us how the law was practically explained by those who perfectly understood it." He reminds us, "that in every instance where the history descends to particulars, we find they constantly adhered to this rule; and that when they *taught*, and men believed, the apostles *baptized* them, and then further instructed them in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

We are as ready to allow as Mr. Kinghorn that baptism was enjoined by the apostolic commission: we are perfectly agreed with him respecting the *law* of baptism, and are accustomed to explain its nature, and enforce its authority, by the same arguments as he himself would employ. We have no controversy with him, or with his party, on the subject of baptism, considered apart from the Lord's Supper; and were he disputing with such as deny its original appointment, or its perpetuity, the passages he quotes would be fully to his purpose. But where the inquiry turns, not on the nature or obligation of baptism, but on the *necessary dependence* of another institution upon it, we are at a loss to perceive in what manner the quotation applies to the question before us. To us it is inconceivable how any thing more is deducible from the *law* of baptism than its present and perpetual obligation. The

existence of a law establishes the obligation of a correspondent duty, and nothing more. The utmost efforts of ingenuity can extort no other inference from it, than that a portion of blame attaches to such as have neglected to comply with it, variable in its degree by an infinity of circumstances too subtle to be ascertained, and too numerous to be recited. We feel no hesitation in avowing our belief that Pedobaptists of all denominations have failed in a certain part of their duty; for this is a legitimate inference from the perpetuity of the baptismal ordinance, joined with our persuasion that we have interpreted it correctly. But if we are immediately to conclude from thence that they are disqualified for Christian communion, we must seek a church which consists of members who have failed in no branch of obedience; and must consequently despair of finding fit communicants apart from the spirits of just men made perfect. Examine the idea of *law* with the utmost rigour, turn it on all sides, and it will present nothing beyond the obligation to a certain species of conduct, so that if Pedobaptists are really disqualified for the Lord's Supper, it must be for some other reason than their non-compliance with a *law*, or otherwise we must insist upon the refusal of every individual who has not discharged all his obligations. To expatiate on the distinctness and solemnity with which the baptismal ceremony was enjoined is little less than trifling, in a debate with persons who fully accede to every part of the statement, and who wish to be informed, not whether our Pedobaptist brethren are in an error, but whether its moral amount, its specific nature, is such as to annul their claims to Christian communion. On this point the passages adduced maintain a profound silence.

If the practice of strict communion derives no support from the *law* of baptism, it is impossible it should derive it from apostolical precedent; since the apostles, as this author observes, adhered constantly to the rule. They did neither more nor less than its letter enjoined: consequently, we must be mistaken if we imagine we can infer any thing from their practice beyond what a just and fair interpretation of its terms would suggest. If the Acts of the Apostles are, as Mr. Kinghorn asserts, "a commentary on the law, showing us how it was practically explained," it is impossible it should contain a tittle more than is found in the text. Let us see how the apostles acted. "When they *taught* and men believed," says our author, "the apostles *baptized* them." Whom did they baptize? Undoubtedly such, and such only, as were convinced, not merely of the truth of Christianity, but of the obligation of the particular rite to which they attended. This is precisely what we do. When we have reason to believe that any part of our hearers have received the truth in the love of it, we proceed to explain the nature and to enforce the duty of baptism; and upon their expressing their conviction of its divine authority, we baptize them. Such a previous conviction is necessary to render it a reasonable service. We administer that rite to every description of persons whom our opponents themselves deem qualified, and withhold it under no circumstances in which the apostles would have practised it. Wherein then, as far as that institution is concerned, does our practice differ from that of the

apostles? Our opponents will reply, that though in the administration of that rite our conduct corresponds with the primitive pattern, yet it differs in this, that we receive the *unbaptized* to our communion, which was not done in the apostolic age. To this we reply, that at that period no good men entertained a doubt respecting its nature—that it was impossible they should, while it was exemplified before their eyes in the practice of the apostles and the evangelists—that he who refused to abide by the decision of inspired men would necessarily have forfeited his claim to be considered as a Christian—that a new state of things has arisen, in which, from a variety of causes, the doctrine of baptism has been involved in obscurity—that some of the best of men put a different interpretation on the language of Scripture on this subject from ourselves—and that it is great presumption to claim the same deference with the apostles, and to treat those who differ from us on the sense of Scripture as though they avowedly opposed themselves to apostolic authority. To misinterpret is surely not the same thing as wilfully to contradict; and however confident we may be of the correctness of our own interpretation, to place such as are incapable of receiving it on the same level with those who withstood the apostles differs little, if at all, from the claim of infallibility.

We reason, as we conceive conclusively, in favour of adult, in opposition to infant baptism: our Pedobaptist brethren avow their inability to discern the justice of our conclusion: and are they on that account to be viewed in the same light as though they intentionally rejected the decision of inspired men? What is this but to set up a claim to inspiration, or, at least, to such an infallible guidance in the explanation of Scripture as is equally exempt from the danger of error or mistake? If we examine it accurately, it amounts to more than a claim to infallibility: it implies in the Pedobaptists a knowledge of this extraordinary fact. The apostles were not only inspired, and consequently infallible teachers, but were known and acknowledged to be such by the primitive Christians: and before we presume to demand an implicit acquiescence in our conclusions, and to consider ourselves entitled to treat dissentients as we suppose the opponents of the apostles would have been treated, it behooves us to evince our possession of infallibility by similar evidence. As I have not heard of our opponents making such an attempt, I cannot sufficiently express my surprise at the loftiness of their pretensions, and the arrogance of their language. In their dialect, all Christians besides themselves are "*opposed* to a divine command,"* "refuse subjection to Christ, and violate the laws of his house."†

The justice of their proceeding, founded on the pretension of apostolical precedent, is perfectly congenial with its modesty. Upon the supposition that a professor of Christianity, in the times of the apostles, had scrupled the admission of adult baptism, could he, we would ask, in the circumstances then existing, have been considered as a good man, or a genuine convert? The reply will unquestionably be, No. "He," said St. John, "who is of God heareth us: he who heareth not us is

* Booth. † Kinghorn.

not of God: hereby ye know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."

In this case, then, it is admitted that the simple fact of rejecting adult baptism would have been sufficient to set aside a pretension to the Christian character. Is it sufficient now? Are the Pedobaptists to be universally considered as bad men, or, at least, as persons whose Christianity is doubtful? Nothing is more distant from the avowed sentiments of our opponents. Where, then, is the justice of classing together men of the most opposite descriptions; or of inferring, that because the apostles would have refused communion to an unbaptized person, at a time when it is acknowledged that none but false professors could remain in that state, it is our duty to refuse it to some of the most excellent of the earth, merely on account of the absence of that ceremony? As it is admitted, on all hands, that baptism was then so circumstanced that the omission of it was inconsistent with a credible profession of piety, nothing more is necessary to account for the precedent which includes it; it was the necessary result of the then state of things, and the apostles, it is acknowledged, could not have extended their communion beyond the limits of that rite, without incorporating insincere professors. But if this reason is sufficient to account for it, it is unphilosophical and unreasonable to seek for another. The supposed inherent and inseparable connexion between the two positive institutes is another and a totally different one, which is sufficiently excluded by the preceding reasoning.

We presume it will not be doubted that Scripture precedent is founded on wisdom, that it is not arbitrary and capricious. It would betray great irreverence to suppose that men acting under divine inspiration were not, in every branch of their official conduct, especially in whatever related to the regulation and government of the church, moved by the strongest reasons. Hence the inquiry why they acted as they did is essential to a rational investigation into the force and authority of Scripture precedent. Their proceedings were regulated by their judgment, or rather, by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, which enlightened their minds and directed their movements. If the *reason* for rejecting unbaptized persons in the primitive age applies to the case of Pedobaptists, the argument for strict communion, derived from the practice of the apostles, is unanswerable. But if the cases are totally dissimilar—if our opponents can assign no *such reason* for excluding their Christian brethren, as might justly have been urged against the admission of the unbaptized in the times of the apostles, the argument is totally inconclusive.

It is decided, by the express declaration of our Lord, that he who refuses obedience to any part of his will is not a Christian. "Then," saith he, "are ye my disciples if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you." But while there was no diversity of opinion on the subject, the voluntary omission of the baptismal ceremony could arise from nothing but a contumacious contempt of a divine precept, of which no sincere Christian could be guilty. Here, then, we discover a sufficient reason for the matter of fact urged by our opponents, without supposing

an intrinsic or invariable connexion between the two ordinances. The principle of open communion would have compelled us to act precisely in the same manner as the apostles did, had we been placed in their circumstances. How vain, then, the attempt to overthrow that principle by appealing to a precedent which is its legitimate and necessary consequence; and how unreasonable the demand which urges us to treat two cases as exactly similar of which our opponents equally with ourselves are compelled to form the most opposite judgment. Let the advocates of restricted communion express the same opinion o the state and character of those whom they now regard as unbaptized, which we are certain they would feel no scruple in avowing with respect to such as had refused submission to that ordinance in primitive times, and we shall deplore their blindness and bigotry, but shall acknowledge they reason consistently from their own premises. But we will never submit to identify two cases which agree in nothing but the omission of an external rite, while that omission arises from causes the most dissimilar, and is combined with characters the most contrary. We will not conclude, that because the apostles could not bear with those that were evil, they would have refused to tolerate the good; or that they would have comprehended under the same censure the contumacious opposer of their doctrines, and the myriads of holy men whose only crime consists in mistaking their meaning in one par ticular.

The remarks we have already made will be deemed, we trust, a sufficient answer to the triumphant question of Mr. Kinghorn. "How is it," he asks, "that with the same rule for the guidance of the church the ancient Christians could not receive a person to communion without baptism, if the modern both can and ought to receive him?"* The answer is obvious. If the ancient Christians had received a person without baptism, they would have received a false professor; but when we at present receive one whom we judge to be in a similar predicament, we receive a sincere though mistaken brother; we receive him who is of that description of Christians whom we are commanded to receive.

If it still be contended that the two cases are so parallel that the proceeding of the apostles, in this particular, is binding as a law, we would once more ask such as adopt this plea, whether they themselves form the same judgment of the present Pedobaptists as the apostles would have entertained of such as continued unbaptized in their day. If they reply in the affirmative, they must consider them as insincere, hypocritical professors. If they answer in the negative, since, by their own confession, they look upon the persons whom they exclude in a different light from that in which the party excluded by the apostles was considered, what becomes of the identity of the two cases? and what greater right have they to *think differently* of the state of the unbaptized from what the apostles thought, than we have for *treating* them differently? They are clamorous in their charge against us of wilful deviation from apostolic precedents. But there are precedents of

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 29.

thinking as well as of acting, and it is as much our duty to conform to the *sentiments* of inspired men as to their actions. The chief use, indeed, which inspired precedents are of is to assist us to ascertain the dictates of inspiration. The conduct of enlightened, much more of inspired, men is founded on sound speculative principles. If the advocates of strict communion urge us with the inquiry, By what authority do you presume to receive a class of persons whom you acknowledge the apostles would not have received? we reply, By what authority do you presume to deviate from the opinion of the apostles respecting that same class? Many whom you exclude from your communion as unbaptized you acknowledge as Christians, and without hesitation express your confidence of meeting them in glory. Did the apostles entertain the same judgment respecting such in their day? Were they prepared to recognise them as brethren, and to congratulate them on their eternal prospects, while they repelled them from communion? Would they not, without hesitation, have applied to them the language which our Saviour uses, respecting such as refused to be baptized by John, whom he affirms to have "rejected the counsel of God against themselves?"

These questions admit but of one answer. Here then is a palpable disagreement between the sentiments of our opponents and those of the apostles, on the subject of the unbaptized; the apostles would have both rejected and condemned them: *they* reject them as members, and embrace them as brethren. Were they called upon to defend themselves from the charge of contradicting the apostles, they would begin to *distinguish* between the two cases, and urge the different circumstances which accompany the omission of the same ceremony now, from what must be supposed to have accompanied it in the times of the apostles; in other words, they would attempt to show that a new case has arisen, which necessitates them to form a correspondent judgment. They assume the same liberty with ourselves of *thinking differently* of the state of the many who continue unbaptized in the present day, from what they are persuaded the apostles would have thought of such as had remained in that situation in theirs; and yet, with strange inconsistency, accuse us of a deviation from a divine precedent in not treating them both in the same manner; forgetting that if the cases are parallel, they themselves are guilty of an avowed and palpable contradiction to the sentiments of the apostles.

When men differ in their views of one and the same object, it will not be denied that they contradict each other. We offer them the alternative, either to deny or to affirm that to be unbaptized at present is in a moral view a very *distinct thing*, and involves very different consequences from being in that predicament in the times of the apostles. If they deny it, they stand self-convicted of contradicting the sentiments of inspiration, by speaking of that class of persons as genuine Christians whom they cannot but acknowledge the apostles would have condemned. If they adopt the affirmative, our practice by their own confession is not opposed to apostolic precedent, because that precedent respects a *different thing*.

They not only depart from the precedent of the apostles in the judgment they form of the unbaptized, but in every other branch of their conduct, with the exception of the act of communion. On all other occasions they treat as brethren, and frequently, and that much to their honour, cultivate an intimate friendship with persons whom they deem to be destitute of that rite, the omission of which, in the apostolic age, would have incurred the sentence of wilful impiety and disobedience. What, we ask, is more opposite to primitive precedent than the practice of including the same persons within the obligations of Christian love and friendship whom they prohibit from communion? of inviting them into the pulpit, and repelling them from the table; uniting with them in the most retired and elevated exercises of devotion, and excluding them from the church? It is scarcely in the power of imagination to feign a species of conduct more diametrically opposite to all the examples of Scripture; and when they have reconciled these and many similar usages with the practice of the primitive age, they will have supplied us with a sufficient apology for our pretended deviation from the same standard.

It will probably be thought enough has been already said to demonstrate the futility of the argument founded on original precedent: but as this is considered by our opponents in general, as well as by Mr. Kinghorn in particular, as the main prop of their cause, we must be permitted to detain the reader a little longer, while we enter on a closer examination of his reasoning.

In order to show that baptism is a necessary term of communion, he labours hard to prove that it is a term of *profession*. "It is obvious," he says, "that their baptism (that of believers) was the term of professing their faith by the special appointment of the Lord himself." To the same purpose he afterward adds, "the fact still exists that it pleased the Lord to make a visible and ritual observance the appointed evidence of our believing on him. If obedience to a rite be not a term of salvation (which no one supposes), yet it was ordered by the highest authority, as an evidence of our subjection to the Author of salvation: and a Christian profession is not made in *Christ's own way without it*." Recurring to the same topic,* he observes, "Whatever may be the conditions of salvation, a plain question here occurs, which is, *Ought the terms of Christian communion to be different from those of Christian profession?* The only answer which one would think could be given to this question would be, No: Christian communion must require *whatever the Lord required as a mark of Christian profession*."

It is hoped the reader will excuse my accumulating quotations to the same purport, which would have been avoided were it not evident that the writer considered this as his stronghold, to which he repairs with a confidence which bespeaks his conviction of its being impregnable. We will venture, however, to come close to these frowning battlements: we will make trial of their strength, that it may be seen whether their power of resistance is equal to their formidable aspect. We freely acknowledge that if the *principle* can be established that baptism is *invariably* essen

* Page 20.

tial to a Christian profession, the cause we are pleading must be abandoned, being confident that a true profession of the Christian religion is inseparable from church communion.

Previous to entering on this discussion, it will be necessary to premise, that the words *profession* and *confession*, together with their correlates, are usually denoted by one and the same word in the original, and that they are evidently used by the authors of the received translation as synonymous.* Hence, whatever is affirmed in the New Testament respecting the *confession* of Christ, or of his sayings, may without hesitation be considered as predicated of a *profession;* since whatever difference may subsist in the popular meaning of the words, whenever they occur in Scripture, they are merely different renderings of the same term.†

Now, that the profession of Christ is an indispensable term of salvation is so undeniably evident from the New Testament, that to attempt to prove it seems like an insult on the understanding of the reader. I must crave his indulgence, however, for recalling to his recollection a very few passages, which will set the matter beyond dispute. "Whoever," said our Lord, "shall confess (or *profess*) my name before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven: and whoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." Matt. x. 32. The same language occurs, with little variation, in the gospel of St. Luke, xii. 8. In these words we find an awful denunciation of the rejection of every one, without exception, who shall be found to have denied Christ; and as this denial is immediately opposed to *confessing* him, it must necessarily attach to all such as have not made a confession. If a medium could be supposed between the denial and the open assertion of the doctrine of Christ, it is precluded by the following sentence: "Whoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and of the Father, and of the holy angels."—Luke ix. 26. Thence we may with certainty conclude, that from whatever motives a profession of Christianity is omitted or declined, eternal perdition is the consequence. Nor is this the doctrine of the evangelists only: it is repeatedly asserted, and uniformly implied, in the writings of the apostles. "If thou shalt confess (or *profess*) with thy mouth," saith St. Paul, "the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession (or *profession*) is made unto salvation."—Rom. x. 9. We find the same writer on another occasion exhorting Christians to hold fast the *profession* of their faith without wavering, when the previous possession of that is necessarily supposed, a firm adherence to which is inculcated as essential to salvation. "Let

* The word in the original is *ὁμολογία*, derived from *ὁμολογέω*, a verb of the same import.

† See Matt. x. 32. Luke xii. 8. Matt. vii. 23. John ix. 22. John xii. 42. Acts xxiii. 8; xxiv. 14. Rom. x. 9, 10. 1 John iv. 15. 2 John vii. Rev. iii. 5. 1 Tim. vi. 13. *τὴν καλὴν ὁμολογίαι*, a good profession, English Translation.—Heb. iii. 1. *τῆς ὁμολογίας ἡμῶν*, of our profession, E. T.—Heb. iv 14. *τῆς ὁμολογίας ἡμῶν*, our profession, E. T.—Heb. x. 23. *τὴν ὁμολογίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος ἀκλινῆ*, the profession of our faith without wavering.—Matt. vii. 23. *τότε ὁμολογήσω αὐτοῖς*, then will I profess unto them. In each of the preceding passages the same word, under different inflections, is employed, and they contain all the passages which relate to the absolute necessity of a religious profession.

us hold fast the *profession* of our faith without wavering."—Heb. x. 23. It is to the faithful, considered as such, without distinction of sects and parties, that St. Paul addresses the following exhortation: "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High-priest of our *profession*, Christ Jesus."—Heb. iii. 1. In the Epistle to the Hebrews alone, the phrase *our profession* occurs three times, and in each instance in such a connexion as demonstrates it to be an attribute common to all Christians.*

It would be trifling with the reader's patience to multiply proofs of a position so evident from Scripture as the inseparable connexion between a genuine profession of Christ and future salvation. But if this be admitted, what becomes of the principal argument urged by Mr. Kinghorn for strict communion, which turns on the principle that "baptism is the term of Christian profession?" Who can fail to perceive that if this proposition is true, the Pedobaptists are, on our principles, cut off from the hope of eternal life, and salvation is confined to ourselves? The language of our Saviour and his apostles is decisive respecting the necessity of a *profession* in order to eternal life: this writer affirms that baptism, as we practise it, is an essential term of profession. By comparing these propositions together, a child will perceive that the necessary inference is the restriction of the hope of future happiness to members of our own denomination. This in truth is the conclusion to which all his reasoning tends; it meets the intelligent reader at every turn; but when he expects the writer to advance forward and press the fearful consequence, he turns aside, and is afraid to push his argument to its proper issue. He travails in birth, but dares not bring forth; he shrinks from the sight of his own progeny. Sometimes he seems at the very point of disclosing the full tendency of his speculations, and more than once suggests hints in the form of questions which possess no meaning, but on the supposition of that dismal conclusion to which his hypothesis conducts him. Let the reader pause, and meditate on the following extraordinary passage:—"If baptism," he says, "was once necessary to communion, either it was then essential to salvation, or that which was *not* essential to salvation *was* necessary to communion. If it was *then* essential to salvation, how can it be proved not to be essential now?"† Again he asks, "What is the meaning of the term condition? In whatever sense the term can apply to the commission of our Lord, or to the declarations of the apostles *respecting repentance, faith, and baptism*,—is not baptism a condition either of communion or of salvation, or of both? Do the conditions either of salvation or of communion change by time? Are they annulled by being misunderstood?"‡

Whatever of argument these passages may be supposed to contain, will be examined hereafter; the design of producing them at present is to show the tendency of the principle; and the reader is requested to consider whether they are susceptible of any other sense than that the terms of salvation and of communion are commensurate with each other; that whatever was once essential to salvation is so still; and that bap-

* Heb. iii. 1; iv. 14; x. 13. † Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 19. ‡ Ibid. p. 20.

tism is as much a condition of salvation as faith and repentance. But if these are his real sentiments, why not speak plainly, instead of "ut tering parables?" and why mingle in the same publication representa tions totally repugnant, in which he speaks of such as dissent from him on the subject of baptism as persons of the most distinguished character —persons whom God will undoubtedly bring to his kingdom and glory?* The only solution this problem admits is to suppose (what my knowledge of his character confirms) that to the first part of these statements he was impelled by the current of his arguments, to the latter by the dictates of his heart. But however that heart may rebel, he must learn either to subdue its contumacy, or consent to relinquish the principal points of his defence. He has stated that the limits of communion must be the same with those of profession; that the Pedobaptists have none, or, at least, none that is valid; and that, on *this* account and for *this* reason, they are precluded from a title to Christian fellowship. But the word of God, as we have seen, repeatedly insists on men's professing Christ as an indispensable requisite to salvation. How is it possible, then, if Mr. Kinghorn's position is just, to evade the consequence, that those whom he would exclude from communion are excluded from salvation?

"If obedience to a *rite*," he observes, "be not a term of salvation (which no one supposes), yet it was ordered by the highest authority, as an evidence of our subjection to the Author of salvation; and a Christian profession is not made in Christ's *own way without it*."† If the open acknowledgment of Christ by the Pedobaptists is not to be esteemed a *real* and *valid* profession, the inevitable consequence is, for reasons sufficiently explained, that they cannot be saved; but if it is *valid* (however imperfect in one particular), it is so far made in Christ's *own way*. The expression which he employs to depreciate it has either no meaning or none that is relative to the object of the writer. The scope of his argument obliged him to prove that adult baptism is essential to a Christian *profession;* he now contents himself with saying, that without that ordinance it is not made in the right way, which may, with equal propriety, be affirmed of every deviation from the doctrine and precepts of the gospel. Just as far as we suppose a person to depart from these, we must judge his profession not to be made in *Christ's own way;* nor will any thing short of a *perfect* profession, or, in other words, a perfect comprehension and exhibition of the will of Christ, exempt him from such an imputation; so that in this sense, which is the only one applicable to the case before us, to make a profession of the Christian religion in *Christ's own way* is not the lot of a mortal. But though this is the only interpretation consistent with truth, we cannot for a moment suppose that such was the meaning of the writer. He must have intended to assert that the parties to whom they are applied fail to make what *Christ himself* would deem a profession. This supposition is forced upon us by the scope of his rea soning, which went to prove that baptism is necessary to communion, *because* it is necessary to a profession. This supposed necessity must

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 21, 36 † Ibid. p. 18.

consequently relate, not to its *completeness*, or *perfection*, but to its *essence*: he must be understood to affirm, that they have not exhibited what Christ will consider as a profession. But as *he* has solemnly affirmed his determination to reject such as are destitute of it, we ask again, how Mr. Kinghorn will reconcile this with the salvability of Pedobaptists?

Whatever it seems good to infinite wisdom to prescribe as an indispensable condition of future happiness, we must suppose that it exactly corresponds to its name: it is true and genuine in its kind, and wants nothing which constitutes the essence. If an open acknowledgment of Christ is the prerequisite demanded under the title of a profession, it would seem strange to assert that something less than what is correctly denoted by that expression is, after all, sufficient to satisfy the condition. This, however, is what Mr. Kinghorn must assert, to be consistent with himself; for he will not deny that the advocates of infant-sprinkling have exhibited something *like a profession;* but as they have not made it in *Christ's own way*, it is not, strictly speaking, entitled to that appellation, and, consequently, cannot claim the privileges it secures. But if the case is as he states it, he must either confine the hope of salvation to his own party, or admit that, in the solemn denunciations before recited, it is not *really* a profession of Christ which is required, but merely something which resembles it. Whether the use of language so replete with ambiguity, or collusion, is consistent with the character of the "true and faithful witness," we leave to the decision of the reader. According to Mr. Kinghorn, while there are two modes of avowing our Christianity, one so essentially defective as not to deserve the name of a *profession*, the other sound and valid; when the Supreme Legislator thought fit to enjoin the profession of his name, under the sanction of eternal death, he intended to insist on the first, in distinction from the last of these methods. Let him who is able digest these absurdities; from which whoever would escape must either abandon the ground which Mr. Kinghorn has taken, or consign the Pedobaptists to destruction.

It is time, however, to recur to the questions with which he has urged his opponents, and which he supposes it impossible to solve on my principles. "If baptism," he observes, "was *once* necessary to communion, either it was then essential to salvation, or that which was *not* essential to salvation was necessary to communion. If it was *then* essential to salvation, how can it be proved not to be essential *now?* If it be argued that it was not essential to salvation *then*, it must either be proved that communion was held without it, or Mr. Hall's position must fall."*

Of the preceding dilemma I embrace without hesitation the affirmative side, and assert that in the apostolic age baptism *was* necessary to salvation. To the query which follows, "how then can it be proved that it is not essential now," I reply that it is unnecessary to attempt it, because it is admitted by Mr. Kinghorn himself; and it is preposterous to attempt the proof of what is acknowledged by both parties

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 19.

It is very astonishing, after he had so clearly avowed his conviction of the exalted character and unquestionable piety of many Pedobaptists, he should ask the question: but he was probably so dazzled with the seeming subtlety and acumen of these pointed interrogatories, as not to perceive their total irrelevance. If he feels any hesitation in affirming that baptism was essential to salvation in primitive times, he entertains a lower idea of its importance than his opponents; but on the contrary supposition, unless he totally retracts his liberal concessions, he must acknowledge that which was *once* necessary to salvation is not so now. The difficulty attending the supposition of a change in the terms of salvation is urged with little propriety by one to whose hypothesis they apply in their full force; nor are they, when fairly examined, at all formidable. Owing to the incurable ambiguity of language, many truths founded on the clearest evidence assume an appearance of paradox; and of this nature is the proposition which affirms that the terms of salvation are not unalterable; which may, with equal propriety, be affirmed or denied, in different senses. Since the *fundamental laws* of the kingdom of God are of equal and invariable obligation, a cordial compliance with which is essential to eternal felicity,—since faith and repentance are at all times, and in all places, indispensable prerequisites to a justified state, in popular language, there would be no impropriety in asserting that the conditions of salvation, under the gospel, remain the same from age to age.

But if this proposition is taken in its utmost rigour, and applied to every particular connected with the faith and practice of Christians, it is manifestly false. There are certain parts of Christianity which, as they exhibit the basis, and propound the conditions of the new covenant, belong to its essence; certain doctrines which are revealed because they are necessary; and others, which are necessary only because they are revealed: the absence of which impairs its beauty, without destroying its being. Of this nature are its few and simple ceremonies. But while this distinction is admitted, it will not be denied that the wilful perversion of the least of Christ's precepts, or the deliberate and voluntary rejection of his instructions in the smallest instance, would betray an insincerity utterly inconsistent with the Christian character. "He who shall break the least of these my commandments, and teach men so, he shall be of no esteem in the kingdom of Heaven."* The truth or precept in question may be of such an order, that a simple ignorance of it may not be fatal; yet to resist it, *knowing* it to be of divine authority, would be pregnant with the highest danger. The great Head of the church will not permit us to set voluntary limits to our obedience: we must consent to receive all his sayings or none. But it must be manifest, on reflection, that on its first publication the visible *appendages* of Christianity were exhibited with a lustre of evidence which no honest mind could withstand; and that no pretence for their neglect could subsist among such as professed religious integrity. Such was eminently the case with the two institutions which have occasioned the present controversy. The constant practice of the apostles

* See Campbell's Translation, Matt v. 19

appealing to the senses of men, and illustrating the import of their oral instruction, made the point of duty so plain, that its omission, in such circumstances could be ascribed only to voluntary corruption.

Nor is this the only example which might be adduced. By orthodox Christians the explicit belief of the doctrine of the atonement is now considered as indispensably necessary to salvation; but that the immediate followers of Christ were, during his personal ministry, so far from embracing this truth that they could not endure the mention of his death without expressing the utmost impatience, and that they knew not what was intended by his resurrection, are undeniable facts. The full development of the gospel scheme, made at a subsequent period, has in this instance rendered that essential to salvation which could previously subsist without it.

It may also be observed, that a diversity of sentiment has arisen among Christians from different modes of interpreting the word of God, which has given birth to various sects and parties, unknown in primitive times. On many of these points, it is impossible to suppose but that the sentiments of the inspired writers were expressed with sufficient perspicuity to be perfectly understood by the parties to whom they were originally communicated; and who, having repeatedly attended their ministry, had heard those particulars more fully illustrated and confirmed which are briefly touched upon in their writings. Who can doubt that the true idea of election, whether it intends, as the Arminians assert, the distinction conferred on some, above others, in the collation of external benefits, or the preordination of individuals to eternal life, was clearly ascertained by the primitive Christians, so as to exclude the possibility of controversy and debate? The Arminian will contend that the first Christians entertained his notion of election and grace; the Calvinist, with equal confidence, will maintain that the true and primitive interpretation of Scripture is in favour of his hypothesis; and neither of them can consistently admit that the members of the primitive church adopted a different system from that which they respectively embrace. One of the parties will contend that the apostolic church consisted entirely of Arminians; the other that it included none but Calvinists.

Were it allowed that *some* variety of opinion on this mysterious topic might subsist even among the earliest converts, it is impossible to suppose there were none at that period who understood the doctrine of St. Paul: it would be most injurious to the reputation of that great writer to suppose he expressed himself with an obscurity which uniformly baffled the power of comprehension. Let his meaning, for argument's sake, be supposed to agree with the Arminian system; the adoption of that hypothesis was, on this supposition, essential to the salvation of him who was acquainted with that circumstance. For such a person to have embraced the Calvinistic sentiments would have been to pour contempt on the apostolic doctrine, and to oppose his private judgment to the dictates of inspiration. If we invert the supposition, the result is a similar conclusion in favour of the Calvinist. Were these parties to exclude each other from communion, under pretence that the primitive

Christians were all Calvinists, or all Arminians; were the Calvinist to assert that he dares not sanction so serious a departure from truth as the denial of election, and that to receive such as were erroneous in this point would be to admit a class of persons who had no existence in the primitive church, he would argue precisely in the same manner as Mr. Kinghorn. How would our author repel this reasoning, or justify a more liberal conduct? He certainly would not allege the original *obscurity* of the apostolic injunctions, and the possibility of primitive converts mistaking their meaning: he would unquestionably insist on the different degrees of importance attached to revealed truths, and the palpable difference between mistaking the meaning and avowedly opposing the inspired writers. But this is precisely our mode of defence.

When a dispute arose on the obligation of extending the rite of circumcision to the gentiles, a council, consisting of the apostles and elders, was assembled to determine the question. Their decision was, that the gentiles should no longer be troubled on that head, but that they should be strictly enjoined, among other things, carefully to abstain from things strangled, and from blood. It is universally acknowledged that it was the design of this injunction to prohibit the use of blood in food. This precept was enjoined expressly on the gentiles, without the slightest intimation of its being of temporary duration; nor did it commence with the Jewish dispensation, but was in force from the period of the deluge. I have not the smallest doubt that it is of perpetual force, however little it may be regarded in modern practice; and were the observation of it proposed as a term of communion, I am not aware of a single argument adduced by our opponents for their narrow exclusive system which might not with superior advantage be alleged in favour of such a regulation. If it be urged that there never was a period when it was not the duty of believers in Christ to be baptized, it may be asserted with equal confidence that the precept of abstaining from blood was invariably observed by the faithful from the time of Noah. If it be urged that the primitive church consisted exclusively of such as were baptized, it is equally certain that it consisted only of such as abstained from blood. That it was "once a term of communion" none will deny: "how then comes it to cease to be such?" In this case there is no room to allege a misapprehension of the meaning of the precept; it is susceptible but of one interpretation; and if the terms of communion are not "annulled by being misunderstood,"* much less when there is no such pretence. The only perceptible difference in the two cases is, that the precept respecting blood was not promulgated by the Saviour himself: but it resulted from the solemn and unanimous decision of his apostles, and is of more ancient origin than any other Christian institute. If our opponents attempt to depreciate its importance by asserting that it is merely ritual and ceremonial, so is baptism; and as they were both enjoined by the same authority, both universally maintained in the primitive church, if the absence of one of these observances constitutes a church of *different materials*, so must the neglect of the other.

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 20

Such as violate the abstinence in question will not pretend that they observe the prohibition: they satisfy themselves with asserting their conviction (a conviction not sustained by a syllable of Scripture) that it is only of temporary obligation; and as Pedobaptists profess their conscientious adherence to the baptismal precept, which they merely demand the right of interpreting for themselves, upon what principle is it that a mistake in the meaning of a positive injunction is deemed more criminal than its avowed neglect; or why should an error of judgment, which equally affects the practice in both cases, be tolerated in one, and made the ground of exclusion in the other? This reasoning, it is acknowledged, bears with the greatest weight on such as conceive the prohibition of blood to be still in force; who, if they adopt the principle of Mr. Kinghorn, ought, to be consistent, immediately to separate themselves from such as are of a contrary judgment. The same argument equally applies to laying on of hands after ordination and baptism. It is acknowledged that this rite was universally practised in the primitive times, that it claims the sanction of apostolic example, and it is enumerated by St. Paul among the *first principles* of Christian doctrine. Wherever that practice is laid aside, it may with equal truth be affirmed that the church consists of *different materials* from those admitted by the apostles; and it may be asked with an air of triumph, in the words of this writer, by what authority we presume "to make a Scriptural rite of less consequence in the church of Christ than it was once?"*

Thus much may suffice for the vindication of our pretended departure from ancient usage and apostolic precedent. But as this topic is supposed to include the very pith and marrow of my opponent's cause, the reader must excuse my replying to some other parts of his reasoning. Confident of the soundness of our principles, it is my anxious wish that nothing may pass unnoticed that wears the shadow of argument; and that no suspicion be afforded of a desire to shrink from any part of the contest.

"If an obedience to a rite," says our author, "be not a term of salvation (which no one supposes), yet it was ordered by the highest authority, as an *evidence* of subjection to the Author of salvation."† He repeatedly asserts that it was prescribed as an *evidence* of faith in him. In another place he styles it "the appointed *evidence* of our putting on Jesus Christ," and affirms that "the church of Christ acting upon the rule he has laid down, cannot recognise *any person* as his disciple who is not baptized in his name."‡

Let us first ascertain the precise meaning of these remarkable passages. He cannot be supposed to assert that baptism is *of itself* a sufficient evidence of saving faith: Simon Magus was baptized, who had "no part or lot in the matter." His meaning must be, that the ordinance in question forms a necessary *part* of the evidence of faith, insomuch that in the absence of it our Lord intended no other should be deemed valid. That this was the case in the primitive age we feel no hesitation in affirming; we have also shown at large the reason on

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 92. † Ibid. p. 18. ‡ Ibid. p 140.

which that conclusion is founded. But in no part of Scripture is there the slightest intimation that it was more *specifically* intended as the test of faith, than compliance with any other part of the mind of Christ; or that it was *in any other sense* an evidence of the existence of that attainment, than as it was necessary to evince the possession of Christian sincerity. Thus much we are most willing to concede, but are at a loss to know what is gained by it, unless our opponent could demonstrate that it occupies the same place at present, and that it is still necessary to constitute a valid evidence of faith in the Redeemer. If this is what he means to assert (and nothing besides has the least relation to his argument), how will he reconcile it with the confidence he so often expresses of the piety of the Pedobaptists? His objection to their communion, he elsewhere informs us, "does not arise from suspicions attaching to their Christian character,"* to which he trusts he is always willing to render ample justice. He has no suspicion of the piety of those who are destitute of that which Jesus Christ prescribed as *the evidence* of faith, and whom he affirms "it is impossible for the church, acting on the rule which he has laid down, to recognise as his disciples." I am at a loss to conceive of a more palpable contradiction.

If there be any meaning in terms, the word evidence means that by which the truth of a fact or a proposition is made manifest, and the absence of which induces either hesitation or denial. Its place in the intellectual world corresponds to light in the natural; and it is just as conceivable how an object can be beheld without light, as how a fact can be ascertained without evidence. Mr. Kinghorn, it seems, however, has contrived to solve the problem; for while he affirms that the patrons of infant baptism are destitute of that which Infinite Wisdom has prescribed as the evidence of faith, and by which we are to recognise his disciples, he expresses as firm a conviction of their piety as though they possessed it in the utmost perfection. Let me ask on what is his conviction founded—will he say upon evidence? But he assigns as a reason for refusing their fellowship, that they are destitute of that which Christ prescribed for that purpose. Will he distinguish between that private evidence which satisfies his own mind, and the sort of evidence which Christ has demanded and enjoined? But what unheard, of presumption to oppose his private judgment to the dictates of Heaven; and, while the Head of the church has appointed the performance of a certain ceremony to be the invariable criterion of discipleship, to pretend, in its absence, to ascertain it by another medium! To attempt to prove that every thing really is what God has appointed it, and that Infinite Wisdom, where figurative language is excluded, calls things by their proper names, would be to insult the understanding of the reader. If compliance with adult baptism is, in every age, the appointed *evidence* of faith in Christ, it undoubtedly *is* what it pretends to be; and to ascribe faith to such as are destitute of it is a sort of impiety.

"No church," he assures us, "acting agreeably to the rules of Christ, can recognise them as his disciples."† What strange magic

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 67. † Ibid. p. 140.

lies concealed in the word church! This writer, in a multitude of places, makes no scruple of avowing his attachments to the members of other denominations; he even anxiously guards against the supposition of his indulging a thought to the prejudice of their piety; and the sentiments which he entertains himself he must be supposed to recommend to the adoption of his brethren. In his individual character, he feels no objection to *recognise* them to the full as Christians; nay, he expresses the sentiments of recognition in a studied variety of phrase; but the moment he conceives himself in a church, his tone is altered, and he feels himself compelled to treat them as strangers and foreigners. Why this contradiction between the language of the individual and the language of the church? If they *are* Christians, why should the knowledge of the fact be suppressed there? We are taught by St. Paul to consider the church as the pillar and ground of the truth, where she is supposed to exhibit, as in a focus, the light and love which actuate her respective members; and instead of dissonance between her public principles and the private sentiments of her members, we naturally look for a perfect harmony, or rather, for a more illustrious exhibition of what every one thinks and feels apart—for a great and combined movement of charity, corresponding to her more silent and secret inspirations. But we are doomed to anticipate it in vain; for while the advocates of strict communion are shocked at the idea of suspecting the piety of their Pedobaptist brethren, they contend it would be criminal to recognise it in the church. What mysterious place is this, in which we are forbidden to acknowledge a truth proclaimed without scruple everywhere else; which possesses the property of darkening every object enclosed within its limits, and of rendering Christians invisible and impalpable to each other! In the broad daylight of the world, notwithstanding their minor differences, they are recognised with facility; but the moment we enter the sombrous gloom of a Baptist church, we are lost from each other's view; and like those who visited the cave of Triphonius, return pale, dejected, and bewildered. Of such societies we might be almost tempted to exclaim—"My soul, come not thou into their secret, and to their assembly be not thou united!" Shocked as we are at such illiberality, we suppress the emotions which naturally arise on the occasion, remembering (strange as it may seem) how often it is associated with talents the most respectable, and piety the most fervent.

CHAPTER III.

The supposed necessary Connexion between the two positive Institutes further discussed, wherein other Arguments are examined.

The reader can scarcely be too often reminded that the present controversy turns *entirely* on the supposed necessary connexion between the two positive Christian institutes; the recollection of which will at once convince him of the total *irrelevancy* of much which it has been customary to urge on the subject. Our opponents frequently reason in such a manner as would lead the reader to suppose we were aiming to set aside adult baptism. Thus they insist on the clearness with which it is enjoined and exemplified in the sacred volume, contend for its perpetuity, and represent us as depreciating its value, and dispensing with its obligation; topics which might be introduced with propriety in a dispute with the people called Quakers, or with the followers of Mr. Emlyn, but are perfectly irrelevant to the present inquiry. It surely requires but little attention to perceive that it is one thing to *tolerate*, and another to sanction; that to affirm that each of the positive rites of religion ought to be attended to, and that they are so *related* that a mistake respecting one instantly disqualifies for another, are not the same propositions. An attention to that distinction would have incredibly shortened the present debate, and shown the futility of much unmeaning declamation, and even of much unanswerable argument. We wish, if possible, to put an end to this σκιομαχια, this fighting with shadows and beating the air, and to confine the discussion to the *real question*, which is, whether the two positive ordinances of the New Testament are so *related to each other*, either in the nature of things or by express command, that he whom we deem not baptized is, *ipso facto*, or from that circumstance alone, disqualified for an attendance at the Lord's table. This, and this only, is the question in which we are concerned.

That there is not a necessary *connexion*, in the nature of things, between the two rites, appears from the slightest attention to their nature. It will not be pretended that the Lord's Supper is *founded* on baptism, or that it recognises a single circumstance belonging to it; nor will it be asserted to be a less reasonable service, or less capable of answering the design of its appointment, when attended to by a Pedobaptist, than by persons of our own persuasion. The event which it "shows forth" is one in which all denominations are equally interested; the sacrifice which it exhibits is an oblation of whose benefits they equally partake; and so little affinity does it bear to baptism, considered as a ceremony, that the most profound consideration of it will not suggest the idea of that rite. As far as reason is capable of investigating the matter, they appear *separate* ceremonies, no otherwise related than as they emanate from the same source, and are prescribed to the same description of persons. In a word, judging from the

reason of the case, we should not for a moment suspect that the obligation of commemorating the Saviour's death depended upon baptism: we should ascribe it at once to the injunction, "Do this in remembrance of me." Since positive duties arise (to human apprehension at least) from the mere will of the legislator, and not from immutable relations, their nature forbids the attempt to establish their inherent and essential connexion. In the present case, it is sufficient for us to know that whatever God has thought fit to enjoin must be matter of duty; and it little becomes weak and finite mortals to limit its sphere, or explain away its obligation, by refined and subtle distinctions.

It remains to be considered whether the *necessary connexion* we are seeking can be found in positive prescription. We again and again call upon our opponents to show us the passage of Scripture which asserts that dependence of the Lord's Supper on baptism which their theory supposes; and here, when we ask for bread, they give us a stone. They quote Christ's commission to his apostles, where there is not a word upon the subject, and which is so remote from establishing the essential *connexion* of the two ceremonies, that the mention of one of them only is included. They urge the conduct of the apostles, though it is not only sufficiently accounted for on our principles, but is such as those *very principles* would, in their circumstances, have absolutely compelled us to adopt; and surely that must be a very cogent proof that the apostles were of their sentiments which is derived from a matter of fact, which would undeniably have been just what it is on the contrary supposition. They baptized, because they were commanded to do so; they administered the Lord's Supper, because our Saviour enjoined it on his disciples; and both these duties were prescribed to the societies they formed, because the nature and obligation of each were equally and perfectly understood. What is there in this, we ask, which our hypothesis forbids us to imitate, or which, had we been in their place, our views would not have obliged us to adopt?

The late excellent Mr. Fuller, whose memory commands profound veneration, attempts in his posthumous tract on this subject to establish the connexion between the two rites, by the joint allusion made to them in the epistles of St. Paul. From their being *connected together* in his mind, on those occasions, he infers an inherent and essential connexion. With this view, he adduces the tenth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians, which asserts that the ancient Israelites had a figurative baptism "in the cloud, and in the sea, and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that rock which followed them, and that rock was Christ." "If the apostle," he remarks, "had not connected baptism and the Lord's Supper together in his mind, how came he so pointedly to allude to them both in this passage?" He brings forward also another text to the same purpose, where St. Paul affirms we are all "baptized into one body, and are all made to drink into the same spirit." It is freely admitted that these, and perhaps other texts which might be adduced, afford examples of an allusion to the two ordinances at the same time, whence we may be certain that they were present together in the mind

of the writer. But whoever considers the laws of association must be aware how trivial a circumstance is sufficient to unite together in the mind ideas of objects among which no essential relation subsists. The mere coincidence of time and place is abundantly sufficient for that purpose. In addressing a class of persons distinguished by the possession of peculiar privileges, what more natural than to combine them in a joint allusion, without intending to assert their relation or dependence; just as in addressing a British audience on a political occasion, the speaker may easily be supposed to remind them at the same time of their popular representation, of the liberty of the press, and the trial by jury, without meaning to affirm that they are incapable of being possessed apart. In fact, the warmest advocates of *our* practice would feel no sort of difficulty in adopting the same style, in an epistle to a church which consisted only of Baptists; consequently, nothing more can be inferred, than that the societies which St. Paul addressed were universally of that description; a fact we have already fully conceded. The only light in which it bears upon the subject is that which makes it perfectly coincide with the argument from primitive precedent, the futility of which has been sufficiently demonstrated.

The *unities* which the apostle enumerates as belonging to Christians, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, are also set in opposition to us. "There is," saith he, "one body and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." That this text is irrelevant to the present argument will appear from the following considerations: Since no mention is made of the Lord's Supper, it cannot be intended to confirm or illustrate the relation which baptism bears to that ordinance, which is the only point in dispute. Next, it is very uncertain whether the apostle refers to water baptism or to the baptism of the Spirit; but admitting that he intends the former, he asserts no more than we firmly believe, that there are not two or more valid baptisms under the Christian dispensation, but *one* only; a deviation from which, either with respect to the subject or the mode, reduces it to a nullity. Lastly, since his avowed object in insisting upon these *unities*, was to persuade his reader to maintain inviolate that unity of the spirit to which they were all subservient, it is extremely unreasonable to adduce this passage in defence of a practice which involves its subversion. "The same fountain," St. James tells us, "cannot send forth sweet waters and bitter:" but here we see an attempt to deduce discord from harmony; and to find an apology for dividing the mystical body of Christ, in the most pathetic persuasive to unity. The celebrated Whitby, a Pedobaptist and an Episcopalian, appears to have felt the full force of this admirable passage, when he deduces from it the three following propositions: "1st. That sincere Christians only are truly members of that church catholic of which Christ is the head. 2dly. That nothing can join any professor of Christianity to this one body, but the participation of the spirit of Christ. 3dly. *That no error in judgment, or mistake in practice, which doth not tend to deprive a Christian of the spirit of Christ, can separate him from the church of*

Christ."* Thus it is that this learned commentator conceives himself to have discovered a demonstration of the principles we are abetting, in the very words our opponents urge for their overthrow.

Such is the substance of Mr. Fuller's argumentation on the subject; and on a basis so slight did he attempt to rear the edifice of strict communion. In how different a light will he be viewed by posterity, as the victorious impugner of socinian and deistical impiety! and who, on looking back on his achievements in that field, and comparing them with his feeble efforts in the present, but must exclaim with regret *quantum mutatus ab illo!* Whether he felt some distrust of the ground he was treading, which for several reasons I strongly suspect, or whether it is to be ascribed to the infelicity of the subject, it is not easy to say; but his posthumous pamphlet on communion will unquestionably be considered as the feeblest of all his productions. The worthy editor probably calculated on great effects to arise from the dying suffrage of a man so highly esteemed; but before he ventured on a step so injurious to his fame, he should have remembered, that we live in an age not remarkably disposed to implicit faith, even in the greatest names.

But it is time to return to Mr. Kinghorn, with whose management of the subject we are at present more immediately concerned. As bold a polemic as Mr. Fuller was generally considered, he was pusillanimity itself compared to my present antagonist; who, in the ardour of combat, has not scrupled to remove landmarks which *he*, I am well persuaded, would have considered as sacred. It cannot be denied that he has infused by these means some novelty into the discussion, and that many of his arguments bear an original stamp; but whether that novelty is combined with truth, or that originality is such as will ultimately secure many imitators or admirers, is another question.

Having already shown that no *inherent* connexion subsists between the two *rites* under discussion, it remains to be considered, as we have already remarked, whether they are connected by *positive* law. Is there a single word in the New Testament which, fairly interpreted, can be regarded as a *prohibition* of the admission of unbaptized persons to the Lord's Supper?

Let Mr. Kinghorn answer this question for us: "*The New Testament*," he tells us, "*does not prohibit the unbaptized from receiving the Lord's Supper*, because no circumstance arose which rendered such prohibition necessary."† Whether a prohibition was necessary or not involves a distinct inquiry; we request the reader's attention to the important concession, that *it does not exist*. The reason he assigns, however, for its not being necessary is, that "it is acknowledged the law of baptism was clearly understood, and that the unbaptized could not be received into the church." "There was, *therefore*," he adds, "no reason why a prohibitory declaration should exist." We fully agree with him, that at the period of which he is speaking, the law of baptism was fully understood; and *on that account*, we say, such

* Whitby *in loco.* † Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 32.

as refused to obey it could not be received into the church. We also admit, that while there was this clear understanding, no such prohibition as we demand was requisite. But if it was rendered *unnecessary* because of this clear understanding, as this writer informs us, must it not by his own allowance become necessary, when that understanding ceases? If the presence of one thing *makes* another *unnecessary*, must not the absence of the same thing restore the necessity?

In the present instance, the *only* reason he assigns for an express prohibition *not* being then necessary is, that the ordinance of baptism was *perfectly understood;* surely if this be the *only* reason, the necessity must return when that reason ceases; in other words, there will be a necessity for an express prohibition of the unbaptized whenever the precept respecting baptism ceases to be understood. Has it, or has it not, ceased (in our apprehension) to be understood by modern Pedobaptists? If it be admitted that it has, then, on his own principle, an express prohibition of the unbaptized to receive the Lord's Supper has become necessary. But he acknowledges none exists; whence the only conclusion to be deduced is, either that the word of God has omitted what is necessary in itself, or (which is rather more probable) what is necessary to support *his hypothesis.* The word of God, it should be remembered, makes adequate provision for the direction of the faithful in every age, being written under the guidance of that Spirit to whom the remotest futurity was present; and though it was by no means requisite to specify the errors which were foreseen to arise, it is not a sufficient rule, unless it enables us to discover which of these are, and which are not, to be tolerated in the church. The doctrine which asserts that baptism is an indispensable requisite to communion this writer expressly informs us was not promulgated to the primitive Christians, because they did not need it: their clear understanding of the nature of the ceremony was sufficient of itself to secure an attention to it, in the *absence* of that doctrine. This is equivalent to an acknowledgment, if there be any meaning in terms, that if they had not had the clear comprehension of the ordinance which he ascribes to them, they would have needed that truth to be propounded, which in their situation was safely suppressed. But if the primitive Christians would have found such information necessary, how is it that the modern Pedobaptists, who are, according to our principles, precisely in the situation here supposed, can dispense with it? What should prevent them from turning upon Mr. Kinghorn, and saying, We judge ourselves baptized; but supposing we are not, you assert that there is no scriptural prohibition of the unbaptized approaching the Lord's table, which you yet acknowledge would have been necessary to justify the repelling of primitive Christians from that privilege, had it not been for their perfect knowledge of the nature of baptism. But as you will not assert that *we* possess that knowledge, how will you defend yourself in treating us in a manner which, by your own concession, the apostles would not have been justified in treating their immediate converts?

It was generally supposed that the abetters of strict communion

imagined some *peculiar* connexion between baptism and the Lord's Supper beyond what subsists between that ceremony and other parts of Christianity. Our present opponent disclaims that notion. "If the above evidence," he says, "be justly stated, there is a real instituted connexion between baptism and the whole of the succeeding Christian profession. So that there is no reason why the connexion between baptism and the Lord's Supper should be more distinctly marked, than between baptism and any other duty or privilege."* But if this be the case, why do they confine their restriction to the mere act of communion at the Lord's table? In every other respect they feel no scruple in acknowledging the members of other denominations as Christians: they join with them in the most sacred duties; they interchange devotional services; they profess to value, and not unfrequently condescend to entreat, an interest in their prayers. In a word, no one who had not witnessed their commemoration of the Lord's Supper would suspect they made any distinction. There are a thousand acts which they perform towards such as practise infant-sprinkling, which would be criminal and absurd on any other supposition than that of their being members of Christ, and co-heirs of eternal life. By the mouth of our author, whom they are proud of considering as their organ, they inform us that every other duty and privilege is as much dependent on baptism as the celebration of the Eucharist; yet it is *this* duty and *this* privilege alone in which they refuse to participate with Christians of other persuasions. How will they reconcile their practice and their theory; or rather, how escape the ridicule attached to such a glaring contradiction? The Sandemanian Baptists have taken care to shelter themselves from such animadversions, by a stern and consistent process of intolerance; but the English Baptists appear to resemble Ephraim, who mixed himself with the nations, and was a "cake half-turned." Is there no duty, is there no privilege, characteristic of a Christian, but what is included in receiving the sacrament? How is it that they have presumed to break down the sacred fence, to throw all open, and make all things common, with the exception of one narrow enclosure? What in the mean time becomes of apostolic practice and ancient precedent? How admirably are these illustrated by their judicious selection of the Lord's table as the spot over which to suspend the ensigns of party!

When we read of Priscilla and Aquila taking Apollos home, and instructing him in the way of the Lord more perfectly, we give full credit to the narrative; but had we been informed that these excellent persons, after hearing him with great delight, refused his admission to the supper of the Lord, on account of some diversity of opinion or of practice, the consent of all the manuscripts and versions in the world would have been insufficient to overcome the incredulity arising from an instantaneous conviction of its total repugnance to the maxims and principles of primitive Christianity. Yet this would have been nothing more than an anticipation of the practice of our opponents.

They attempt to justify themselves in this particular on two grounds; first, that they "do nothing more than their opponents;" and "where

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 30.

their conduct is deemed the most exceptionable, they only copy the example which the Pedobaptists set before them, and support by pre-eminent talents."* *They do nothing more than their opponents* What then? *we* hold no principle inconsistent with our practice; *we* have not confined the profession of Christianity to ourselves; much less are we accustomed to make a practical distinction between the participation of the Eucharist and other duties and privileges, after stating, in so many words, that the Scripture authorizes no such distinction. The plea derived from the disposition of Pedobaptists to cultivate a religious intercourse we leave to be answered by himself, who has told us that "we meet on unequal terms." "The latter (Pedobaptists) surrender no principle, they do not unite with those whom they deem unbaptized."†

Their other pretence is, that "prayer and praise are not *exclusive* ordinances of the church; that they were in being before it was formed, and have been parts of true religion under every dispensation."‡ But is it not the peculiar prerogative of the faithful to offer *acceptable* devotion? Is not *prayer in the name of Jesus* a peculiarity of the new dispensation, and is not the requesting a Pedobaptist to present it on our behalf as clear an acknowledgment of his Christianity as admitting him to communion, and, consequently, as incompatible with his own maxim, that the "church of Christ, acting upon the rule he has laid down, cannot recognise *any* person as his disciple who is not baptized in his name?"

Mr. Kinghorn is bound, by his own declaration, in his treatment of other denominations, to abstain from every action which will imply an explicit acknowledgment of their being Christians; so that, as far as he is concerned, it is of no consequence whatever whether prayer or praise belong to natural or revealed religion, or whether they are or are not exclusive ordinances of the church: the only question is, whether the reciprocation of such services with other denominations be not a recognition of their Christianity. If it be, he is, by his acknowledgment, as much obliged to abandon it as the practice of mixed communion, and exactly for the same reason; since he informs us that his objections to that practice are not founded on any *peculiar* connexion between communion and baptism, but on the common relation which the latter bears to "all the duties of Christianity."

The preceding remarks are more than sufficient to evince his inconsistency with himself; which, however glaring, is not more so than his deviation from ancient precedent. That the first Christians did not interchange religious services with those with whom they refused to *communicate*,—that they did not countenance, in the exercise of their ministry, men whom they refused to acknowledge as members of the church, it would be ridiculous to attempt to prove; the fact will be instantly admitted. Let it be also remembered that this deviation is of far greater magnitude than that with which we are accused. Who that remembers that the kingdom of God is not meats nor drinks, that its nature is spiritual, not ritual, can doubt that the moral duties of religion, the love of the brethren, with its diversified fruits and effects,

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 173. † Ibid. p. 64. ‡ Ibid. p. 175

taken in their whole extent, form a more important object than the single observation of the Eucharist?

Mr. Kinghorn himself deprecates the very suspicion of placing even baptism, in point of importance, on a level with the least of the moral precepts of Christ. But with respect to the whole of these, they allow themselves to depart as far from scriptural precedent, in its literal interpretation, as ourselves. In the affair of communion, they boast of adhering to "that plain rule of conduct" (to adopt my opponent's words), "*so did the apostles, and therefore so do we.*"* But here their conformity stops; in every other branch of social religion, in whatever respects the interior of the kingdom, they claim the liberty of treating the unbaptized in precisely the same manner with members of their own denomination, wherein they pronounce their own condemnation; for what should prevent us from retorting, "*so did not the apostles, but so do ye?*"

The distress and embarrassment which the consciousness of this glaring inconsistency occasioned the venerable Booth are sufficiently depicted in his *Apology*. The sturdy saint perfectly reels and staggers under its insupportable weight: which, to use the language of Archbishop Tillotson, is a millstone round the neck of strict communion, which will inevitably sink it into perdition; an incongruity which the most obtuse understanding perceives, and no degree of acumen can defend; and which so totally annuls the plea of original precedent, which is their sheet-anchor, as to leave it doubtful whether its advocates are most at variance with the apostles or with themselves. The venerable apologist has recourse to the same distinctions with the present writer, but with so little success, and, apparently, with so little satisfaction to himself, that if the spirit of controversy did not blunt our sensibility, we should sincerely sympathize with his distress. It is humiliating to see the manly and majestic mind of a Booth stooping to such miserable logomachies.

The advocates of the restrictive system must change their ground; they *must* either go forwards or backwards. They have already conceded so much to the members of other denominations, that, if they would preserve the least show of consistency, they must either concede more or withdraw what they have granted. They have most unreasonably and capriciously stopped, and fixed their encampment where no mortal before ever thought of staying for a moment. They have already made such near approaches to the great body of those whom we deem unbaptized, as places them at an unmeasurable distance from the *letter* of the apostolic precedent, though in perfect harmony with its spirit; while they preposterously cling to that letter, as the reason for refusing to go an inch farther. They remain immoveable (to change the figure), not because they rest on any solid basis, but because they are suspended between the love of the brethren and the remains of intolerance; just as Mahomet's tomb is said to hang between two magnets of equal powers, placed in opposite directions.

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 98

The Scottish Baptists (as I have been informed) act consistently Conceiving, with Mr. Kinghorn, that immersion, on a profession of faith, is a necessary introduction to the Christian profession, they uniformly abstain from a participation in sacred offices with the members of other societies, and, without pretending to judge of their final state, treat them on every occasion as men whose religious pretensions are doubtful. Whoever considers the import of the following passage will be surprised Mr. Kinghorn should feel any hesitation in adopting the same system. "It is granted," says our author, "that baptism is not expressly inculcated as a preparative to the Lord's Supper; neither is it inculcated as a preparative to any thing else. But the *first* act of Christian obedience is, of course, succeeded by the rest; and the required acknowledgment of our faith in Christ, in the nature of things, ought to *precede* the enjoyment of the privileges which arise from faith."*

By the *first* act of Christian obedience he unquestionably intends the reception of baptism; and the meaning of the sentence turns entirely on the word *first*. He designs to assert, that such is the prescribed order of religious actions, that unless that ordinance is *first* attended to, every other performance is invalid; that whatever it may be in itself, not occupying its proper place, it cannot lay claim to the character of a duty. We should be extremely concerned at imposing a false construction on his words; but if this is not his meaning, we despair of discovering it. But if our interpretation is just, unless we can conceive of a religion availing for eternal life, in the total absence of duties, it is equivalent to asserting that none besides our denomination possess true religion. He expressly tells us every other duty must *succeed*, that is, must come *after* baptism, which, with respect to Pedobaptists, is impossible on our principles; whence, it necessarily follows, that while they retain their sentiments they are disqualified for the performance of duty. The only conceivable method of evading this conclusion is to make a distinction, and to affirm, that though baptism ought, agreeably to the institution of Christ, to *precede* the other branches of religion, yet that when it is omitted from a misconception or mistake, the omission is not of such magnitude as to prevent their being accepted. But should our author explain himself in this manner, he will not only coincide with us, but his argument for strict communion is relinquished. Having acknowledged that "the connexion between baptism and the Lord's Supper is *not more directly* marked in Scripture than between that ordinance and any other duty,† were he now to make a distinction in favour of the sacrament, and confine their disqualification to that particular, he would be guilty of an express contradiction. Nor are his words susceptible of such an interpretation. The assertion he makes is in the form of a general proposition; which is, that *all* the duties of Christianity must succeed baptism, in contradiction to going before it; and the disqualification for the Lord's Supper, which he represents the Pedobaptists as lying under, is inferred solely from the consideration of its constituting a part of those duties.

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 30. † Ibid.

Thus much for the *duties;* let us next hear what he says of the *privileges* of Christianity. Baptism, which he styles "the required acknowledgment of our faith in Christ," he tells us, "ought to *precede* the enjoyment of the privileges which arise from faith." They *ought* to precede, but *do* they in fact? Is it *his* opinion that all other sects, as a punishment for their disobedience in one particular, are left destitute of the spiritual immunities which flow from faith? If it is not, it behooves him to reflect on the presumption of such a mode of speaking, which is little less than arraigning the wisdom of the great Head of the church, who dispenses his favours in a manner so different from that which he ventures to prescribe. Should he reply, that Jesus Christ, as a sovereign, is at liberty to act as he pleases, but that we are under an obligation of adhering to the settled order of his house, it is easy to perceive that this evasion is neither consistent with truth nor sufficient to establish his consistency with himself. Are not his partisans in the daily habit of exhibiting towards the members of other societies tokens of their fraternal regard, of inviting them to every branch of Christian fellowship, short of admission to the sacrament? Will they deny that the communion of saints, even in the absence of that institution, is an important privilege?

In the next place, to represent the bestowment of spiritual blessings on the great body of the faithful, through the lapse of fifteen centuries, whose salvability, it is confessed, is capable of demonstration from Scripture,—to speak of this as an extraordinary and extrajudicial procedure, is to confound the most obvious distinctions.

The terms of salvation, which are, radically, faith and repentance, are clearly propounded in the word of God; and surely it will not be doubted that multitudes out of the pale of our sect have exhibited such proofs of their possessing these qualifications, that their enjoyment of the Divine favour is not to be ascribed to a secret economy, similar to what has been conjectured by some to extend to virtuous pagans. Where revelation is silent, it becomes us to copy its reserve; but in the present instance, so far is this from being the case, that few propositions are more susceptible of proof from that quarter, than that an error with respect to a positive rite is not fatal; whence the necessary inference is, that the bestowment of his favours on such as labour under that imperfection is a known part of his conduct: that it is not only his intention so to act, but that he has taken effectual care to inform us of it; not, we presume, for the purpose of enabling us to contradict it, but as a pattern for our humble imitation.

When the Holy Ghost fell upon the gentiles assembled in the house of Cornelius, though Peter had, a short time before, doubted the lawfulness even of eating with them, he considered it as such a seal of the Divine approbation, that he felt no hesitation in immediately admitting them to all the privileges of the church. He did not presume (with reverence be it spoken) to be stricter or more orderly than God. "For asmuch," said he, "as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us who believed, who was I that I should withstand God?" a question which we presume to recommend to the serious consideration of Mr

Kinghorn and his associates. The principle on which he justified his conduct is plainly this, that when it is once ascertained that an individual is the object of Divine acceptance, it would be impious to withhold from him any religious privilege. Until it be shown that this was not the principle on which he rested his defence, or that the practice of strict communion is consistent with it, we shall feel ourselves compelled to discard, with just detestation, a system of action which St. Peter contemplated with horror, as *withstanding God:* and when I consider it in this just and awful light, I feel no hesitation in avowing my conviction that it is replete with worse consequences, and is far more offensive to God, than that corruption of a Christian ordinance to which it is opposed. The latter affects the exterior only of our holy religion, the former its vitals; where it inflicts a wound on the very heart of charity, and puts the prospect of union among Christians to an interminable distance.

This new doctrine, that the tenure by which religious privileges are held is appropriated to the members of one inconsiderable sect, must strike the serious reader with astonishment. Are we in reality the only persons who possess an interest in the common salvation? If we are not, by what title do others possess it? Certainly not in consequence of their faith, for we are expressly taught by this writer, that baptism must *precede* the enjoyment of the privileges which arise from faith;* in which, however, he expressly contradicts himself, for he assures us that none are fit subjects of baptism who are not previously believers in Christ, and *justified in the sight of God by their faith.* He must either say, then, that they lose their justification unless they comply with that ordinance, or present us with the portentous doctrine of a justification which stands alone, a widowed and barren justification, productive of no advantage to its possessor.

Let it also be seriously considered, whether the positions we have been examining do not coincide with the doctrine of the *opus operatum*, the opprobrium of the Romish church. But as some of my readers may not be acquainted with the meaning of these terms, it is proper to remark, that the Church of Rome attributes the highest spiritual benefits to certain corporeal actions, or ceremonies, independent of the character and disposition of the performer. For example, she believes that the ceremony of baptism secures to the unconscious infant, by its intrinsic efficacy, the infusion of regenerating grace, without regard to the intention or disposition of the parties concerned; and that the element of bread in the sacrament operates in the same manner in procuring the pardon and augmenting the grace of the communicant. Hence the members of that church lay little stress on the exercise of faith, and the cultivation of holy dispositions, compared to the dependence they place on "bodily exercise," on masses, penances, auricular confessions, and a multitude of external observances, which form the substance of their religion. Consistent Protestants, on the contrary, while they conscientiously attend to every positive institute,

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 30.

according to the measure of their light, look upon the few and simple ceremonies of the gospel as incapable of affording the smallest benefit apart from the dispositions and intentions with which they are performed; agreeably to the doctrine of our Saviour, who tells us, that "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." To expatiate on the incalculable mischiefs which have arisen from this doctrine is foreign to our purpose; suffice it to remark that it is held in just detestation by all enlightened Christians.

Our business is to show the coincidence of Mr. Kinghorn's principles with that most dangerous and exploded tenet. He contends that the mere absence of a ceremony, or, if you please, an incorrect manner of performing it, is, of *itself*, sufficient, exclusive of every other consideration, to incur the forfeiture of Christian privileges; of the *privileges in general* which arise from faith.* It is not, according to him, merely the forfeiture of a title to the Eucharist which it involves; *that*, he informs us, is not more affected by it than *any other privilege:* it is the universal privation of Christian immunities which is the immediate consequence of that omission; and, as he acknowledges that many to whom it attaches are regenerated, they must consequently be endowed with right dispositions. For what is that renovation of mind which can exist without them? But if such as are possessed of these in the most eminent degree, which he acknowledges is the case with some Pedobaptists, are yet debarred from spiritual privileges, wherein does this differ from ascribing that efficacy to an external rite which is supposed in the doctrine of the *opus operatum?* and if those who have faith are not entitled to the benefits which result from it, because a certain ceremony is wanting, how is it possible to ascribe more to that ceremony?

Whatever degree of prejudice or inattention we may be disposed to impute to some of the advocates of infant baptism, it would be the highest injustice to comprehend them all under the same censure. There are those, no doubt, who, without adopting our views, have exercised as much thought and exerted as much impartiality on the subject as our observation authorizes us to expect from the brightest specimens of human nature: nay, this author admits that "it is possible they may be some of the most exalted characters in point of piety."† But it surely cannot be doubted that they who merit this encomium are as *conscientious* in their performance of infant, as we in the administration of adult baptism; and as they are, by the very supposition, actuated by dispositions exactly the same, the pure intention of pleasing and glorifying God, if we still conceive them deprived of the privileges which we possess, the difference must be ascribed merely to a ceremony, and the *opus operatum* returns in its full force. This, however, is too faint a statement. It returns in a form more aggravated; for the Papist only contends for a mysterious union between the outward rite and the inward grace, to which the regenerating influence is immediately ascribed, and from which it is considered as inseparable; whereas, on the present hypothesis, regeneration and faith are supposed to exist in the absence of the ceremony, but to be deprived of their prerogatives. The system

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 30. † Ibid.

of the Papist exalts the ritual part of religion to an unwarrantable height, without depreciating the spiritual and internal; the system of my opponent does both.

Thus I have endeavoured to examine, with the utmost care and impartiality, whatever our author has advanced in order to prove the *necessary connexion* between the two positive ordinances under consideration. My apology for extending the discussion to a length tedious, it is feared, to the reader, is, that this is the point on which the whole controversy hinges. As far as its real merits are concerned, I might, therefore, be excused from pursuing the subject further. If the arguments of Mr. Kinghorn on this head are satisfactorily refuted, and the contradictions and absurdities into which he has fallen laid open to the reader, he is already sufficiently answered. That he has taken different ground from his venerable predecessor will not be disputed. He has argued from premises and adopted principles to which that excellent person made no approach. Mr. Booth, whatever was his success, remained on *terra firma;* our author has attempted a flight beyond "the diurnal orb," but, approaching too near the sun, his pinions are melted, and his fall will be conspicuous in exact proportion to the elevation to which he has aspired. He was determined to give the controversy a new and imposing aspect; and conscious that the practice which he undertook to defend had been hitherto rested on no very distinct basis, he determined to dig deep for a foundation, and, in so doing, has disturbed the most received opinions and endangered the most momentous truths. Were I permitted to prognosticate his fate, I should say that his paradoxical mode of defence, whatever applause it may meet with at present, will in the end be of infinite injury to the cause; and his treatise, like the little book in the Apocalypse, be "sweet in the mouth and bitter in the belly."

But though what has already been advanced may be considered as comprehending all that is essential in the controversy, as he has thought fit to introduce other topics, the reader is requested to exercise his patience while we reply to his most important observation on each of these; after which we shall endeavour to show the futility of the answer he has attempted to the principal arguments adduced in favour of our practice.

PART II.

THE COLLATERAL TOPICS INTRODUCED BY MR. KINGHORN CONSIDERED.

CHAPTER IV.

The Charge of dispensing with a Christian Ordinance considered.

Among the various objections to the system we wish to see universally adopted in our churches, there is none more frequently insisted upon than that of its implying a right to *dispense* with a command of Christ.* Though the treatise on the Terms of Communion contains a clear answer to this accusation, yet, as it is again brought forward by our author with unabated confidence, a fuller reply may be deemed requisite.

This writer supposes that the expression "dispensing power," so often used in this controversy, was first suggested by the conduct of Charles the Second, in granting indulgence to the dissenters beyond the allowance of law, a measure which was afterward adopted for similar purposes by James, his successor. It is surprising a person of Mr. Kinghorn's acknowledged learning should fall into such an error; that he should not know that the doctrine of dispensation was familiar to preceding ages, and was the subject of much subtle disquisition and of many refined distinctions among legal writers. It is impossible but that he must have read in ecclesiastical history of the power of dispensation assumed by the pope, which formed a principal branch of the papal revenue, and the exertion of which was regulated by the dictates of the most artful policy. He cannot, surely, have forgotten that the refusal to exercise this prerogative, when it was demanded in order to gratify the capricious passions of Henry the Eighth, was the immediate occasion of the Reformation in England.

The power of dispensation is the power of setting aside the law in a particular instance. It may be exerted by the legislature or by the executive branch of government, under certain regulations, and to a certain extent, previously settled and provided for by the original constitution of the state. As the operation of law is general, and the actions to which it applies are susceptible of endless modifications and varieties, some such power may be occasionally requisite to adapt it more perfectly to unexpected emergencies, and, by a deviation from the letter, to secure its spirit and design. There is one circumstance, how-

* Here the following question deserves our serious regard, first, "Have we any right to dispense with a clear command of Christ?"—*Baptism a Term of Communion*, p. 90

ever, which is invariably attached to the exercise of this prerogative, which shows the impropriety of making it the ground of accusation in the present controversy. It always implies a *known* and *conscious* departure from the law. He who claims a dispensing power asserts his right to deviate from the letter of legal enactments; but whoever merely misinterprets their meaning, and on that account applies them to a case which they were not designed to comprehend, or neglects to carry them into execution within their proper sphere (as his conduct is consistent with the utmost reverence for the law), is at a great remove from exerting a dispensing power. He betrays his ignorance, but usurps nothing.

When the pope granted a dispensation, enabling certain persons to marry within the prohibited degrees, he sanctioned an acknowledged violation of the ecclesiastical canons; just as Charles the First and James the Second, in their respective proclamations of indulgence to tender consciences, proceeded in direct opposition to existing statutes. But we are conscious of no such procedure; if we err, we err from ignorance. We contend that the law is in our favour, and challenge our opponents to prove the contrary; we ask what prohibition we violate by the practice of admitting good men to communion, though they are not supposed to be baptized? This writer acknowledges there is none, but attempts to supply the defect by general reasoning, which appears to us inconclusive. Such is precisely the state of the dispute; not whether we have a right to depart from the law, but whether there be any law to which our practice is opposed. We acknowledge the immersion of believers in the name of Christ is a duty of perpetual obligation; we are convinced of the same respecting the commemoration of our Saviour's passion. Both these duties we accordingly urge on the followers of Christ, by such arguments as the Scriptures supply; but when we are not so happy as to produce conviction, we admit them, without scruple, to the fellowship of the church; not because we conceive ourselves to possess a dispensing power, a pretension most foreign from our thoughts, but because we sincerely believe them entitled to it, by the tenor of the Christian covenant, and that we should be guilty of highly offending Christ by their refusal. The law which we are supposed to violate in this instance we affirm is a mere human invention, a mere fiction of the brain, entirely unsupported by the word of God, which distinctly lays down two positive institutes, baptism and the Lord's Supper, but suggests nothing from which we can conclude that they rest upon each other, rather than that the obligation of both is founded on the express injunction of the legislator. It is our opponents, we assert, who, in the total silence of Scripture, have presumed to promulgate a law, to which they claim the submission due only to the voice of God. Hence the charge of usurping a dispensing power is most preposterous, since it is incapable of being sustained for a moment, until it is demonstrated that the law is in their favour; and when this is accomplished, we pledge ourselves to relinquish our practice immediately; but till it is, to assume it as a medium of proof is a palpable *petitio principii*,—it is begging the question in debate.

We repeat again, what was observed in the former treatise, that this charge owes its plausibility entirely to the equivocal use of terms. As we do not insist upon baptism as a term of communion, we may be said, *quoad hoc*, or so far, to dispense with it; just as our opponents may be said to dispense with that particular opinion, the doctrine of election, for example, which, while they firmly adhere to it themselves, they refrain from attempting to force on the consciences of others; on which occasion, a rigid Calvinist might, with the same propriety, exclaim that they are guilty of dispensing with the truth of God.

So remote is our practice from implying the claim of superiority to law, that it is, in our view, the necessary result of obedience to that comprehensive precept, "Receive ye one another, even as Christ has received you to the glory of the Father." If the practice of toleration is admitted at all, it must have for its object some supposed deviation from truth, or failure of duty; and as there is no transgression where there is no law, and every such deviation must be opposed to a rule of action, if the forbearance exercised towards it is assuming a dispensing power, the accusation equally lies against all parties, except such as insist upon an absolute uniformity. In every instance, he who declines insisting on an absolute rectitude of opinion or practice as the term of union is liable to the same charge as is adduced against the indulgence for which we are pleading. If the precise view which each individual entertains of the rule of faith and practice is to be enforced on every member as the condition of fellowship, the duty of "forbearing with each other" is annihilated: but if something short of this is insisted on, what is wanting to come up to the perfection of the rule is, in the sense of our opponents, dispensed with. Behold, then, the *dispensing power* rises in all its terrors; nor will it be possible to form a conception of an act of toleration where it is not included. Such is the inevitable consequence, if the charge is attached simply to our not insisting upon what we esteem a revealed duty; but if it is sustained on the ground of the necessary dependence of one Christian rite upon another, it is plainly preposterous, since this is the very position we deny; it forms the very gist of the dispute, the proof which will at once consign it to oblivion. The objection, in this form, is nothing more than an enunciation, in other terms, of our actual practice.

In every controversy, the medium by which a disputed point is attempted to be disproved should contain something distinct from the position itself, or no progress is made. There may be a show of reasoning, but nothing more. It is also necessary that the medium of proof, or confutation, should contain some proposition, about which both parties are agreed. But what is the case here? Our opponents object that we exercise a dispensing power. How does this appear? Because, while we acknowledge baptism to be a duty, we do not invariably demand it as a preliminary to church-fellowship. Now let me ask, is this statement any thing more than a mere definition, or description, of the practice which is the subject of debate; so that if an inquiry were made, what we mean by open communion, in what other terms could the answer be couched? The intelligent reader will

instantly perceive, that the medium of proof involves neither more nor less than the proposition to be refuted. Perhaps they will reply, No; you are guilty of dispensing with the law, not merely because baptism is a duty, but because the Head of the church has made it an indispensable prerequisite to Christian fellowship. Here the medium is indeed sufficiently distinct from the proposition which it is intended to confute, but it is so far from being agreed upon between the parties, that it forms the very subject of debate. In other words, they take for granted the very position on which the controversy turns, and then convert their arbitrary assumption into an argument. Thus, in whatever light it is viewed, the odious imputation with which they attempt to load us falls to the ground; and merely shows with what facility they can *dispense* with the rules of logic.

Near akin to this is the charge of "sanctioning" a corruption of a Christian ordinance. But how the mere act of communion with a Christian brother, whose practice we judge to be erroneous in a certain particular, can be justly considered as conferring a sanction on his error, is not a little mysterious. If this is a fair construction, it must proceed upon the general principle that communion sanctions all the imperfections, speculative and practical, of the members whom it includes; and thus our opponents must be understood to approve all the perverse tempers and erroneous views of the individuals whom they receive into fellowship. Will they abide by this consequence? But how is it possible to escape it, if to tolerate and to sanction, to forbear and to approve, are the same thing? Will they assert that St. Paul was prepared to exclude the members of the church at Corinth, against whose irregularities he so warmly protested; or affirm, that by declining such a step, he sanctioned the schisms and tumults, the backbitings, whisperings, and swellings, which he reproved with so much severity? The idea is too ridiculous to be entertained for a moment, but not more than the present allegation.

Were an impartial spectator to witness the celebration of the sacrament by persons of different denominations, what would he infer? That they considered each other as beings "without fault before God," with nothing in their sentiments liable to correction, or in their characters susceptible of improvement? No; the only conclusion which he could consistently draw would be, that they looked upon each other as pardoned sinners, washed in the same fountain, sanctified, though imperfectly, by the same Spirit, and fellow-travellers to the same celestial city.

We must either seek a church such as is not to be found upon earth, or be content to associate with men compassed with infirmities; prepared to exercise towards others the forbearance and indulgence which we need, and to exhibit on every occasion the humility becoming those who are conscious that in "many things we all offend."

Besides, as our author acknowledges that baptism is not to be "compared in importance with the least of Christ's moral precepts," against which men of unquestionable piety are perpetually offending, to a greater or less extent where is the consistency of being more

solicitous to avoid the appearance of sanctioning ceremonia, than moral disobedience?

The following sentiment, marked in italics, and delivered with the solemnity of an oracle, is characterized by the same spirit of extravagance. "The supposition itself," our author says, "that toleration and forbearance will justify us in allowing an omission of any law of Christ in his church, operates as a repeal of that law, and would generally be deemed unreasonable."* As all duty bears respect to a law, it is impossible to conceive of its omission without supposing an equal omission of the law.

He illustrates his assertion by referring to the legal qualification, in landed property, required in a candidate for a seat in parliament; where it is evident, that to render the cases parallel it must be assumed that baptism is, by the appointment of the Head of the church, the necessary qualification for the rights of fellowship, which is the very point in debate; so that we have here another instance of that habit of begging the question with which he is so familiar. On what occasion has he found us concede what is taken for granted in this illustration; or who would be so absurd, after such a concession, as to pursue the argument any further?

The proposition itself is as untenable as its illustration is irrelevant. If every rule of action is repealed, the moment its omission, whether partial or total, whether occasional or habitual, whether intentional or unintentional, is the object of forbearance, a repeal is the necessary concomitant of every conceivable instance of toleration. For say, on supposition, the will of Christ were perfectly complied with in doctrine and in practice, what possible room would there be for mutual forbearance? What, to speak of forbearance when all is right! Is perfection then the object of toleration? But just in proportion as imperfection exists, some law, some rule of conduct, must be neglected; "for where there is no law, there is no transgression." Will it be affirmed, that when St. Paul censured with so much severity the swellings, the tumults, the whisperings, and the backbitings which prevailed in the church of Corinth, who were ready to devour each other; when he found it necessary to remind them that the unjust should not inherit the kingdom of God, did he after all perceive in them no omission of a law of Christ? This surely none will affirm; and as he still continued to exercise forbearance, without the slightest intimation of an intention to exclude them, he was guilty, on Mr. Kinghorn's principles, of repealing the commands of God. As the evils tolerated were of a moral nature, and he tells us that he is far from "equalizing baptism with the least of Christ's moral precepts;" if, in spite of his own concession, he now assigns it a superiority, what is this but a palpable contradiction? But to say that a mistake respecting the nature of a Christian ordinance is not to be borne with in religious society, while evils of a moral kind are and must be tolerated, is to mark its pre-eminence in a manner the most unequivocal.

The mistakes into which he has fallen in this short passage are so

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 53.

gross and so many, that they deserve a distinct enumeration. First, By affirming that to endure, under any circumstances, the omission of a rule of action is to repeal it, he has reduced the very conception of toleration to an impossibility. Secondly, As there can be no moral imperfection but what involves at least an occasional omission of a moral precept, the least of which he affirms is of greater moment than baptism; he must either contend for the propriety of setting aside forbearance altogether, or must be understood to select for its object the greater, in preference to the least, of two evils. Thirdly, In assuming it for granted that there is a law in existence which universally prohibits the unbaptized from communion, he assumes the whole question in debate; and if no such rule is admitted, how is it possible we should be guilty of repealing it. Fourthly, In stigmatizing the practice of not invariably insisting on a compliance with primitive baptism, in order to fellowship, as a virtual repeal of the precept which enjoins it, while we inculcate it as a divine command, and testify our disapproba tion of its neglect, is a strange abuse of terms, founded on the following principle; that whatever is not absolutely and invariably required as a term of communion, is virtually repealed; whence it necessarily follows, that the whole of that duty in which the church of Corinth was defective, that whole portion of the mind of Christ which they failed to exemplify, was considered by St. Paul as no longer binding, since, however it might excite his concern, and draw forth his rebuke, the *want* of it, it is evident, did not prevent his forbearance. Will he abide by this inference? If he declines it, let him show, if he is able, why it is less applicable to the conduct of St. Paul than to ours?

That we do not repeal the ordinance by which our denomination is distinguished, considered as a *duty*, is a fact, of which we give ocular demonstration as often as it is celebrated. True, say our opponents, but you repeal it as a necessary preliminary to the Lord's Supper. To which the answer is obvious: First prove that it is so, and then, should we continue obstinate, load us as much as you please with the opprobrium of abrogating a divine command. But cease to run round this miserable circle, of first assuming the existence of a law confining communion within certain limits, then accusing us of repealing it, and lastly of finding us guilty of transgressing the prescribed bounds, on the ground of that repeal. He who repeals a rule of action reduces the system of duty to exactly the same state as though it had never existed. Whenever we are convicted of doing this, whenever we teach the nullity of baptism, or inculcate a habit of indifference respecting either the mode or the subject of that ordinance, we will bow to the justice of the charge; but till then, we feel justified in treating it with the neglect due to an attempt to convince without logic, and to criminate without guilt.

The πρῶτον ψεῦδος, the radical fallacy of the whole proceeding, consists in confounding an interpretation of the law, however just, with the law itself; in affirming of the first whatever is true of the last; and of subverting, under that pretext, the right of private judgment.

The interpretation of a rule is, to him who adopts it, equally binding

with the rule itself, because every one must act on his own responsibility; but he has no authority whatever to bind it on the conscience of his brother, and to treat him who receives it not as though he were at direct issue with the legislator. It is this presumptuous claim of infallibility, this assumption of the prerogative of Christ, this disposition to identify ourselves with him, and to place our conclusions on a footing with his mandates, that is the secret spring of all that intolerance which has so long bewitched the world with her sorceries, from the elevation of papal Rome, where she thunders and lightens from the Vatican, down to Baptist societies, where "she whispers feebly from the dust."

This writer has, with the best intentions I doubt not, dragged from its obscurity a principle whose thorough application and development would doom, not our societies alone, but every church in the universe, to a confusion of minds and of tongues, a state of discord and anarchy, the healing of which would soon find him other employ than that of attempting to defend the petty and repulsive peculiarity to which he has devoted his labours.

Before I close this chapter, it is proper to observe, in order to obviate misconception, that nothing is more remote from my intention than to plead for a *wilful* omission of any part of the will of Christ. His honour, I trust, is as dear, his prerogative as sacred, in the eyes of the advocates of *Christian*, as it is in those of *sectarian* communion. Let each, in the regulation of his own conduct, pay the most scrupulous attention to his orders; and wherever he distinctly perceives that a professor of religion indulges himself in a known and habitual violation of them, let him, after seasonable and repeated admonition, "withdraw from the brother that walketh disorderly." But let him not presume to control the sentiments and conduct of others by his standard, and treat as an enemy or an alien that humble follower of Christ who is as sincerely devoted to His will as himself; and who, however he may mistake it in some particulars, would shudder at the thought of setting voluntary bounds to obedience. If to tolerate such must subject us to the reproach of repealing the law of Christ, let us remember we are not the first who have been condemned for undervaluing the ritual part of religion, and for preferring mercy to sacrifice. As "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ," we await with much composure and confidence his decision; without indulging the smallest apprehension that we shall meet with less compassion for having shown it, or that we shall incur his displeasure for refusing to "beat our fellow-servants."

CHAPTER V.

An Inquiry how far the Practice of mixed Communion affects the Grounds of Dissent from the Church of England, and from the Church of Rome.

Mr. Kinghorn expresses his surprise that the champions of the hierarchy have neglected in their controversy with dissenters to *avail themselves of the practice of strict communion.* For my part, I am only surprised at his surprise. For supposing (what is most contrary to fact) that it had furnished them with some advantage against a part of the Baptists, what mighty triumph would it be to have proved, that a branch only of a denomination, by no means considerable in their eyes, had been betrayed into an inconsistency? The abetters of a splendid hierarchy were little likely to descend to a petty altercation with the members of one division of dissent, respecting a point which could merely supply an *argumentum ad hominem*, and about which their opponents are far from being agreed.

To us, however, it is of importance to consider whether the doctrine we have attempted to establish is justly chargeable with infringing on the legitimate principles of dissent. With this view, we shall briefly examine the substance of our author's arguments on this subject.

We are accused of inconsistency in arraigning the Church of England "for introducing rites and ceremonies which have indeed no scriptural authority, but which are pleaded for, merely as decent and venerable customs: while we ourselves tolerate in the church the neglect of an institution which we are convinced was universally obeyed in the apostolic times, and which was appointed by the highest authority."* To this we reply that the cases are not parallel; that they differ in the most essential particulars.

It is one thing to tolerate, and another to practise. The law of God invariably and absolutely forbids the latter; that is, it uniformly prohibits the performance of a single action which we esteem contrary to his will, but to say it in all cases forbids the former is to insist on an absolute agreement respecting every branch of practice. The objection is brought against *us*, who neither practise nor sanction infant baptism, that we are chargeable with the same criminality which is supposed to attach to the introducers of human rites and ceremonies in religion,—ceremonies which they unquestionably both practise and approve. The argument of the writer, reduced to the form of a syllogism, is as follows:—

To practise human rites and ceremonies in the worship of God is sinful;

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 123.

But the advocates of mixed communion suffer to remain in the church persons who practise a certain ceremony of human invention;
Therefore their conduct is sinful.

Who does not perceive that the second proposition has no necessary connexion with the first, and that the argument is consequently invalid? In order to establish his conclusion, it behooved the author to prove that we practise and approve infant baptism, which he knows to be impossible. If Pedobaptists required our concurrence in what we esteem an erroneous practice,—nay, if they refused us the liberty of protesting against it, there would be an analogy between the two cases; as it is, there is none.

We are bound by an express law to tolerate in the church those whom Christ has received; and he has, by the acknowledgment even of our opponents, received the Pedobaptists. The first of these positions we feel ourselves justified in affirming till it be disproved; which this writer is so far from having done, that no attempt, we shall plainly make appear, was ever more unsuccessful. But whether it be true or not that we are commanded to act thus, such is our opinion; and with this persuasion, we are not at liberty to act in a different manner. But will such as prescribe human rites and ceremonies pretend to act under a similar conviction,—a conviction that they are bound by the law of Christ to use the cross in baptism, to bow to the east, to kneel at the sacrament, and to exact as a term of communion a compliance with these and other ceremonies, judged by themselves indifferent, and by us sinful? The most zealous champions of the hierarchy make no such pretension, and we may therefore very consistently censure them for enforcing, under such a penalty, the observation of rites for which no divine precept is urged, while we tolerate Pedobaptists in obedience to a divine injunction; unless it be the same thing to practise in the worship of God what it is allowed he has not commanded, and to comply with an express prescription. If the members of the establishment inquire, On what ground do you receive a Pedobaptist? we reply, Because we are expressly commanded to receive him. But if we inquire in our turn, Why do you kneel at the sacrament, and exact that posture of all your communicants?—is it affirmed that they will reply in the same manner? It is not true, then, that mixed communion stands upon the same ground with the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England; consequently, whatever be its merits or demerits in other respects, it may be maintained in perfect consistence with the principle of dissent.

To the objection that it was as much unknown in the apostolic age as the ceremonies in question, we have already replied, that at that period it was impossible there should be any controversy on the subject of baptism, which was so recently instituted and so fully exemplified in the conduct of the apostles; but that now, when a question has arisen, what is baptism, a new case occurs, in the determination of which we must be guided by the precepts respecting mutual forbearance. To this the author replies, in behalf of the churchman, "Very

well; and when the emperors and kings of former days were converted to the Christian faith, and were desirous of sanctioning the gospel by their character, their property, and their influence, another *new case* occurred, of which apostolic times knew nothing. When nations became generally Christian, other *new cases* arose out of the new events of the time."* To this I answer, It is very possible, undoubtedly, for a churchman to utter the same words, and say a *new case* has arisen; but unless he can say it with the same truth, it will be nothing to the purpose. There is no reason why we should not assert what is true, merely because a false assertion respecting another subject may be couched in the same words. Is it true, or is it not, that a refusal to comply with a precept, knowing it to be a command of Christ, is a very different thing from a mere misconception of the nature and import of that command? if it be, will it be asserted that such as had refused to make a profession of his religion, in the way which they were conscious he had appointed, would have been just as excusable as the most candid and impartial of modern Pedobaptists? Unless he will assert this, the author must acknowledge that here is a new case, and that the question how we should treat the wilful contemner of legitimate authority and the erroneous interpreter of Scripture involves separate inquiries. From a multitude of passages, it is manifest that he himself forms a very different opinion of the present Pedobaptists from what he would entertain of such as knowingly and deliberately resisted a positive command. He professes to give them entire credit for their sincerity, and to entertain a firm persuasion of their ready admission into the kingdom of Heaven; which would be absurd on the latter supposition. In maintaining a different conduct towards two descriptions of persons, between which there is acknowledged to be a total diversity of character, we are perfectly consistent; unless it be asserted that judgment ought to have no influence on conduct, nor action be controlled by principle.

Let the impartial reader judge for himself whether it is possible, by any fair mode of argument, to infer from these premises the lawfulness of making the conversion of kings to Christianity a pretext for placing them at the head of the church, or of acknowledging their right to model the worship of God at their pleasure. Yet this is asserted, and these portentous consequences are said necessarily to flow from our principles. It is a matter of some curiosity what kind of syllogism will fairly connect the two following propositions. It is lawful to admit a pious Pedobaptist to communion, because we are commanded to receive such as Christ has received. Therefore, it is lawful to acknowledge a pious prince as head of the church, and to allow him to model its worship as he pleases. We quoted a scriptural precept for the former: will Mr. Kinghorn favour us with something equivalent for the latter; or will he remind us of the passages which assert Christ to be the "Head over all things to the church," or those which command us to "call no man master upon earth?" His reasoning in this, as in the former instance,

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 124.

s clogged with a twofold absurdity: first, he confounds toleration with concurrence; for they who contend for the right of a king to be head, I presume, *acknowledge* him as such: secondly, because we may innocently do what is commanded, or rather are not permitted to do the contrary, he with great simplicity infers we may lawfully venture on what is *forbidden*.

The same reasoning applies to the introduction of ceremonies, and completely invalidates his conclusion, that because we tolerate infant baptism, which we consider as a human invention, we cannot consistently depart from the established church on account of the introduction of rites which we deem superstitious. He represents a churchman as addressing us in the following manner:—"Is not forbearance to be granted to *us* also in what we deem right and expedient? Suppose that we are weak brethren, as weak as you choose to represent us,—why should you not, even in pity to our weakness, tolerate us in adding a few things to the original institutions of the Lord, rather than leave us, and by schism rend the seamless garment of Christ?"* In reply to this, let me ask, Is the toleration of objectionable ceremonies sufficient to constitute a churchman? or are we invited to be mere spectators of these observances, without *joining* in them? But do the Pedobaptists, when *they* propose to commune with us, expect us to join with them in their practice of infant baptism? How futile then is it to conclude, that because we are not to do evil that good may come, we must on no occasion bear with the imperfections we cannot remedy.

He largely insists on the superiority of his system to ours, on account of its being at a greater remove from the principles of the established church. "The strict Baptist," he observes, "can set the churchman at defiance, while he tells him respectfully but plainly that his church is wrong in its very constitution; that it is formed of materials different from those used by the Saviour, and that these materials are united together in a way totally diverse from that of his institution."†

Had he succeeded in showing that his practice is alone consistent with the principles of dissent, his argument would have been to the purpose. But to found a claim to preference merely on a wider deviation from the established church is to take for granted what is palpably false, that the established church, like the kingdom of darkness, is a mere mass of corruption and error, from which the farther we recede we necessarily approach nearer to rectitude. That it comprehends many abuses we sufficiently attest our conviction by our dissent; but as it contains a mixture of good and evil, if we suffer ourselves to look with a more favourable eye upon a doctrine merely because its admission will remove us farther from the establishment, we may fall, ere we are aware, into the gulf of perdition. Upon this principle, we may embrace socinianism; for socinians are, unquestionably, farther removed from the church than orthodox dissenters. We may embrace popery, since all good Catholics consider the Church of England as being in a damnable state. We always supposed it was the agreement

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 125. † Ibid. p. 127

of a doctrine with the Scriptures, not its disagreement with any human system, which formed its true recommendation; and that to consult our antipathies in the choice of a religion was equally unchristian and unsafe.

Besides, the objection which he makes to the constitution of the established church is as consistent with our principles as with his. Where a society embraces a whole nation, and recognises as her members all who are born within certain geographical limits, many who are openly wicked must necessarily be included; and the materials of which it is composed essentially different from those which formed the primitive church, which consisted of such as were "called, and chosen, and faithful." Of such an assemblage it is not too much to say, in the words of this writer, "that the whole body, taken in the aggregate, are of a *different character* from that which is in the New Testament called a church of Christ:"* and as this reason for dissent, deduced from the indiscriminate mixture of good and bad, is not weakened or impaired by the practice of open communion, we are as much entitled as he is to all the advantage it affords.

But when we are accused of using different materials in the erection from those which were originally admitted into the fabric, because we admit some who, in our judgment, are not baptized, we deny the charge, and acknowledge ourselves at a loss to conceive how living stones, built on the only true foundation, can essentially differ from each other on account of a transient ceremony; unless it is affirmed, that sanctifying grace is a less powerful principle of attraction and assimilation than an external circumstance, and that Simon Magus bore more resemblance to the primitive Christians than Richard Baxter. We are at an equal loss to discover how a ceremony can impress a character. That immersion leaves no permanent corporeal mark our senses assure us: is this character then impressed on the understanding, on the heart, or the imagination? For the idea of a character which modifies and changes nothing is as unintelligible to me as the doctrine of transubstantiation.

What the writer means by appropriating to himself and his brethren the exclusive right of setting a churchman at defiance is equally mysterious, especially as clogged with this condition, "as long as he can establish his propositions by sufficient proof." A wonderful prerogative indeed! By setting him at defiance, he intends that he is secure of confuting his arguments, which it seems he is able to effect so long as he can establish the opposite propositions by sufficient proof. What is this more than affirming that he is certain of being able to prove what he can prove? and as the churchman can certainly do the same, they may each enjoy, upon this principle, the pleasure of mutual defiance and mutual triumph.

He either insults the understanding of his readers by the enunciation of a truism, or he means to assert that the practice he has undertaken to defend is so identified with the principles of dissent, that it is incapable of being maintained without it. The falsehood of this assump-

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 127.

tion has been sufficiently evinced already; in addition to which, the reader is requested to reflect on the extreme imprudence of attempting to rest a controversy of such magnitude on so precarious a basis, and to divide and distract a common cause by encumbering it with the debate on baptism and the verbal subtleties of strict communion. To such a mode of defence, the churchman might justly reply, Physician, heal thyself: convince your own denomination of the correctness of your reasoning, before you presume to trouble us with the mysteries of your cabala.

Mr. Kinghorn, in his zeal for baptism, intimates his conviction that the admission of infants to that ordinance will at once legitimate the constitution of the established church, and render a secession from it indispensable. He quotes, with apparent approbation, a long passage from Bishop Hall, intended to show, that if the baptism of the church is valid, its constitution must be so also, which he prefaces by applauding that prelate's discernment, in seeing clearly their intimate connexion. "All your rabbins," says the bishop, "cannot answer the charge of your rebaptized brother. If we be a true church, you must return; if we be not (as a false church is no church of God), you must rebaptize; if our baptism be good, then is our constitution good."* Nothing can be more futile than this mode of arguing, which merely proves that the good bishop, with all his brilliance of genius, was but an indifferent reasoner. He thought himself justified in dissenting from the Church of Rome, notwithstanding her baptism was ever esteemed valid. By the ancient church, through all successive ages from the council of Nice, the rebaptization even of heretics was condemned; though heretics were certainly not esteemed a part of the church. The very society of which the bishop was a member has always professed to consider baptism, administered by every class of dissenters, in the name of the Trinity, as valid; so that, if the reasoning extolled by Mr. Kinghorn is just, he was guilty of schism in refusing to unite at one and the same time with heretics, Roman Catholics, and dissenters.

Not satisfied with asserting that our principles militate against the lawfulness of dissent, he maintains that they are inconsistent with Prot estantism, and that, by necessary consequence, they convict Luther and his associates of schism and rebellion. In the treatise on *Terms of Communion* it had been urged, that if we believe our Pedobaptist brethren to be in a state of salvation, we must acknowledge them as a part of the true church, and that to refuse them communion is to create a schism in the body. Applying this reasoning to the case of the Roman Catholics, he attempts to repel it, by remarking that if "we have no right to refuse their communion with us, till they conform to what we are convinced is the will of Christ, we had no right to leave them because they deviated from his will. The ground is in both cases *the same*. Once take away the obligation of conforming to the will of Christ, and the Reformation is declared a mischievous insurrection, in

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 122.

which all Protestants are involved as aiding and abetting a needless and schismatical project."*

To this I reply, that to suppose us to take away the obligation of conforming *in our own persons* to the will of Christ is to suppose us no longer Christians. For to deny the obligation of obedience is at once to deny his authority, which is equivalent to a formal renunciation of Christianity. But if he means that we are obliged to demand in others a perfect compliance with his will, as a term of communion, he takes away the possibility of toleration; for we can be said to tolerate nothing but what we disapprove, and we can assign no other reason for our disapprobation besides its apparent repugnance to the mind of Christ. His argument, therefore, is entirely nugatory. It is acknowledged that the lawfulness of admitting a Roman Catholic to *our* communion, supposing him to be a real Christian, is a necessary inference from our principles; but to conclude from thence that we are obliged to adhere to *his* is demonstrably false and sophistical; nor is there the least pretence for asserting that the "ground in both cases is the same." Of two actions which involve consequences infinitely different, it is impossible the ground should be the same. To receive a pious Roman Catholic to our communion implies nothing more than an acknowledgment of his being a member of Christ, which is true by the supposition: to commune with him in the rites peculiar to the Romish church is to be guilty of gross idolatry and superstition, which, however pardonable it may be in him, whose conscience is uninformed, in me, who have no such plea, would be damnable. Luther was necessitated to depart from the external communion of the Church of Rome, if he would not partake in her corruptions, because her communion formed a principal part of those corruptions. Besides, since that church maintains the infallibility of all her decisions, and whoever ventures to promulgate a doubt respecting a tittle of her doctrine, is *ipso facto* excommunicated till he recants, when the light of truth revealed to Luther her enormities, it was not left to his option to continue in her society or not, unless he would involve himself in the guilt of most horrid prevarication. He never pretended to depart from the Romish church absolutely, and in every thing, but in those particulars only in which she had corrupted the doctrine of the gospel and adulterated the worship of God; and, however highly he might estimate the advantages of unity, he could not purchase them at the expense of a good conscience, nor dare, by assenting to error, or concurring in superstition and idolatry, "to do evil that good might come." But if a Catholic of whose piety he entertained no doubt had offered himself for communion with him, without recanting popery on the one hand, or proposing to innovate in the worship of God on the other, on such a supposition, if Luther had refused to receive him, his conduct might have been justly censured. Now, I would put it to the conscience of any impartial person, to determine whether Luther would have had precisely the *same reasons* for declining this act of toleration as for refusing his approbation of indulgences, or his adoration of the

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 55

mass. In exercising the forbearance in question, he would have merely attested the piety of the communicant; in the other case, he would have directly countenanced and supported what he esteemed impiety and idolatry. With him who is prepared to assert that each of these methods of proceeding are equally criminal, it is in vain to dispute; but if they are not, the assertion that the *ground* in both cases is the same is undeniably false.

Having detected the palpable sophistry by which my opponent would evince the inconsistency of our principles with the cause of Protestantism and of dissent, it remains only for me to remind him of the facility with which the argument may be retorted, and of the striking resemblance between the system of strict communion and that which is maintained by the churches of England and of Rome.

1. The Romish church, it is well known, pretends to an absolute infallibility; not, however, in such a sense as implies an authority to introduce new doctrine, but merely in the proposal of apostolic traditions and in the interpretation of Scripture. While she admits the Scripture to be the original rule of faith, she requires, under pain of excommunication, that the sense she puts on its words should be received with the same submission with the inspired volume. In what respects, let me ask, is the conduct of the *strict* Baptists different? A controversy arises on the extent of a positive rite, whether it should be confined to adults, or be communicated to infants. Both parties appeal to the Scripture, which the Baptist interprets (in my humble opinion) correctly, in such a manner as to restrict it to believers; the Pedobaptist, with equal sincerity, supposes it to include infants. While the former in his own practice confines it to the description of persons to whom he judges it to belong, he acts with unexceptionable propriety; but when, not satisfied with this, he insists upon forcing his interpretation on the conscience of his brother, and treats him precisely in the same manner as though he avowedly contradicted Christ and his apostles, what is this but an assumption of infallibility? All that infallibility which the Church of Rome pretends to is the right of placing her interpretation of Scripture on a level with the word of God: she professes to promulgate no new revelation, but solely to render her sense of it imperative and binding: and if we presume to treat our fellow-christians, merely because they differ from us in their construction of a positive precept, as unworthy of being *recognised* as Christ's disciples (the very words of this writer), and disqualified for the communion of saints,—if we allow them "faith," while we deny them "obedience," and affirm them not to "revere Christ's authority, submit to his ordinances, or obey the laws of his house," we defy all the powers of discrimination to ascertain the difference of the two cases, or to assign a reason why we must ascribe the claim of infallibility to one, and not to the other.

On another occasion, Mr. Kinghorn observes,* that the strict Baptists show they understand the distinction between *judging for others* and acting on their own responsibility. But in imposing their own sense

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 67.

of Scripture on their brethren, and affirming that on account of their differing from them, they do not "revere the authority of Christ," is either *judging for others*, in every possible sense of the words, or the writer has made an impossible supposition. He adds, they allow that the Pedobaptists, *on their own principles*, do right in forming themselves into churches, and in commemorating the death of their Lord. And must they not do equally right, *on their own principles*, in baptizing infants, unless he will assert that the propriety of baptizing infants is not their principle? If judging for others is supposed to involve a claim of infallibility, and on that account, and that alone, to be shunned, to attempt to vindicate the practice of our opponents from that imputation will baffle the acutest intellect.

2. We have already observed the coincidence of our opponent's system with the doctrine of the *opus operatum*, or the intrinsic and mechanical efficacy of religious rites, independent of the intention and disposition of the worshipper. The Roman Catholic attaches such importance to the rite of baptism, as to believe that when duly administered it is *necessarily* accompanied with the pardon of sin, and regenerating grace. The strict Baptist maintains that its absence, where all other religious qualifications are possessed in the highest perfection which human nature admits, deprives the party of "the privileges of faith,"* and renders him an alien from the Christian church.

Both the Church of Rome and the Church of England have *devised terms of communion of their own*, and rendered it necessary for the members to comply with innumerable things besides those which Christ has enjoined as requisite to salvation. The lawfulness and propriety of doing so is the *palmarium argumentum*, the main pillar and support of strict communion. Let this principle once be abandoned, and the present controversy is at an end, unless our opponents choose to assume new ground, by affirming the necessary connexion between baptism, as they administer it, and the attainment of eternal life; and that they should not perceive the absolute necessity of proceeding so far, in order to be consistent, seems to approach to a judicial infatuation.

3. The adherents to the papal power claim to themselves the exclusive appellation of the *church:* the arrogance of which pretension is faithfully copied by the advocates of strict communion. The former however, by confining salvation within her own pale, avoid the absurdity into which the latter fall, who, while they affirm the great body of the faithful are not entitled to that appellation, are obliged to distinguish between the mystical body of Christ and his church, which the Scriptures expressly affirm to be one and the same.

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 30.

CHAPTER VI.

The Propriety of Appealing in this Controversy to the peculiar Principles of the Pedobaptists—briefly examined and discussed.

It is due, in my apprehension, to the majesty of truth, that she should be defended only by truth, and that we should on all occasions abstain from attempting to increase her partisans by corrupt suffrages. Such are the suffrages she may accidentally gain by the influence of error. As she scorns to employ the aid of violence, which is foreign to her nature, so much less will she condescend to owe any portion of her ascendency to falsehood, which it is her eternal prerogative to confound and to destroy. He who wishes to enlighten the human mind will disdain to appeal to its prejudices, and will rather hazard the rejection of his opinions, than press them as a necessary corollary from misconceptions and mistakes. If the decision of controverted questions is to be subjected to vote, and a superiority of numbers is to pronounce a verdict, the means by which they are procured is a matter of indifference: he who is most successful in enlisting popular humours and prejudices on his side will infallibly secure the victory. To all legitimate argument, however, it is essential for the parties concerned to reason on principles admitted by both; to take their stand upon common ground, and to adopt no medium of proof of the truth of which he who suggests it is not satisfied.

How far Mr. Kinghorn's management of the controversy corresponds with these just requisitions the impartial reader will be at no loss to determine. In his zeal to increase the number of his partisans, he makes frequent and urgent appeals to the Pedobaptists, with whom the point at issue can rarely if ever become a practical question, and who are therefore little interested in its decision. As they admit without hesitation the validity of our baptism, the question whether the right administration of that ordinance be an essential requisite to communion, has no immediate relation to the economy of their churches: it interests them only in the case of those individuals who may be desirous of communing with Baptist societies. As far as it concerns the necessity of that particular rite by which we are characterized, it is a controversy in which we are the only parties; and, however much we venerate the judgment of the religious public, we cannot forget that their motives to a rigorous examination of the question bear no proportion to ours. To them it is a theoretical inquiry, to us a practical one of the most serious moment. If in appealing to them, however he had constructed his reasoning on principles common to Baptists and Pedobaptists, there had been no room for complaint. But instead of this, he enumerates and marshals with such anxiety all the appen

dages of infant baptism, all it assumes and all it infers, as so many irrefragable arguments for his hypothesis, that were we to judge of his sentiments from these passages alone, we should suppose him as tremblingly alive to the consistency of Pedobaptists, as Eli to the preservation of the ark. He adjures them, by every thing which they deem sacred in their system, not to forsake him in the conflict, reminding them that if they do so they must abandon a multitude of positions which they have been accustomed to maintain against the Baptists (that is, against himself), and be compelled to relinquish the field. He therefore exhorts them to be faithful unto death in the defence of error, and to take care that no arts, blandishments, or artifices seduce them to concessions which would embarrass them in their warfare, and render the cause of infant baptism less tenable. Thus he reminds them that by admitting the principle for which we contend, they must relinquish their plea for baptizing infants, on the ground of its "giving the seed of believers a partial membership, which is recognised and completed when they profess their faith in maturer years. Thus one leading popular representation of its utility is given up." This infant membership, however, he elsewhere exclaims against, as the very precursor of antichrist, the inlet to almost every abomination; and this popular representation he considers as a most dangerous fiction.* He tells them, that were he a Pedobaptist, and disposed to adopt my theory, he should be afraid of being pressed with the question, Of what use is infant baptism?† It is unnecessary to remind the reader that in the opinion of Mr. Kinghorn it is of none whatever, but a most pernicious abuse of a Christian ordinance. But what is more lamentable still, he warns them that if "they enter into the spirit of our representation, they will be in danger of neglecting it altogether, and consequently either abandon the whole institution, or be induced by the examination of Scripture to become Baptists;" that they will "be guilty of a complete deviation from the principles of their predecessors; that they must find new arguments for their infant baptism; and that, without attempting to divine what they may be, their cause will be materially injured by the acknowledgment of the necessity of adopting new modes of defence." All this appears very strange from the pen of a zealous Baptist, who contemplates every one of the doctrines which he appeals to with unqualified abhorrence, and who must be aware that just in proportion to the degree of their repugnance to the practice of mixed communion is the presumptive evidence in its favour. To attempt the recommendation of his theory by insisting on the impossibility of reconciling it with what is in his opinion a system of delusion, indicates something nearly resembling the unrestrained impetuosity of a mind so intent upon the end as to be indifferent about the means, and savours more of the art and sophistry of a pleader than of the simplicity which characterizes a sober inquirer after truth. My knowledge of the author forbids the slightest suspicion of any deliberate intention to mislead; but in my humble apprehension he has been betrayed by the warmth of debate and the intemperate sallies of his zeal, into the use, to adopt the mildest

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 17. † Ibid. p. 22

expression, of unhallowed weapons, and, by courting an alliance with error, degraded his cause.

It is probable he will attempt to justify his proceeding by saying he has merely availed himself of an *argumentum ad hominem*. But he has greatly exceeded the limits assigned to that species of argument, which may be very properly employed to repel a particular objection of an opponent, by showing that it recoils upon himself, but should never be laid at the basis of a process of reasoning, because the utmost it can effect is to evince the inconsistency of two opinions, without determining which, or whether either of them, is true.

But it is not merely to acknowledge errors that the author appeals, with a view to discourage our Pedobaptist brethren from uniting with us; he also endeavours to rouse into action a feeling which, whatever name he may think fit to give it, is, in my apprehension, neither more nor less than pride. He remarks, that in joining with us they must either "consider themselves as unbaptized, or satisfied with their own baptism, whatever we may think of it, or as agreeing with the maxim that baptism, in any form, is of no consequence to communion." The first of these suppositions he very properly puts aside as impossible. The second he reminds them is "*degrading*, because they permit themselves to be considered as persons who have not fulfilled the will of the Lord, in the very point in which they believe they have fulfilled it. They consequently unite with us on terms of inferiority; and he who refuses to commune with us, because, in so doing, he tacitly allows himself to be considered as not so complete a disciple of Jesus as he thinks he is, acts a part which is justifiable and dignified."* The amount of this reasoning is, that whenever a Christian perceives that his brother entertains a less favourable opinion of his conduct in any particular than he himself does, he is bound to renounce his communion; because, in every such instance, he must be considered as not so complete a disciple as *he* thinks he is, and to allow himself to be so considered is a meanness. And from hence another consequence infallibly results, that no two Christians ought to continue in communion between whom there subsists the smallest diversity of judgment respecting any point of practical religion; for since each of them, supposing them sincere, must believe his own practice more agreeable to the will of Christ than his brother's, that brother must be aware that he is considered as not so complete a disciple as he judges himself to be, to which it seems it is degrading to submit. The author may be fairly challenged to produce a single example of a disagreement among Christians to which this reasoning will not apply; and, therefore, admitting it to be just, he has established a canon which prohibits communion wherever there is not a perfect unanimity in interpreting the precepts of Christ; which he who reflects on the incurable diversity of human opinions will acknowledge is equivalent to rendering communion impossible.

Although the instance under immediate consideration respects a point of practice, the conclusion will hold equally strong in relation to doctrinal subjects. For, not to remind the reader that different opinions on

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 115, 116.

practical points are in effect different doctrines, and that the whole disagreement with our Pedobaptist brethren originates in these, it is undoubtedly true of points of simple belief, as well as of Christian duties, that whoever adopts a sentiment different from that of his fellow-christians must, by the latter, be regarded as in an error; and, since revelation claims faith as well as obedience, "not so complete a disciple as he thinks he is," to which, if it is degrading for him to submit, his only remedy is to depart and quit the communion. A fine engine truly for dissolving every Christian society into atoms, and for rendering the church of Christ the most proud, turbulent, and contentious of all human associations!

If it be alleged that Mr. Kinghorn's reasoning was not designed to apply to the smaller differences which may arise, but only to grave and weighty matters, such as the nature of a Christian ordinance, the obvious answer is, that it is of no consequence to us for what it was designed, but whether it be sound and valid; in other words, whether it be a sufficient reason for a Pedobaptist's refusing to join with us, that in "so doing he allows himself to be considered as not so complete a disciple as he thinks he is." If it be, the consequences we have deduced will inevitably follow.

Not satisfied, however, with denouncing the union of Pedobaptists with us as "undignified," and as placing themselves on terms of "inferiority," he begs them to consider whether it is not a "surrender of their principles in a manner altogether inconsistent with their views of the law of Christ." This surrender, he proceeds to inform us, consists in their "agreeing to be considered as unbaptized, which is contrary to the opinion which they entertain of themselves." We certainly make no scruple of informing a Pedobaptist candidate that we consider him as unbaptized, and disdain all concealment upon the subject; but how his consent to join us on these terms involves an unworthy surrender of his principles is very mysterious. His principle is, that infant baptism is a part of the will of Christ, which we believe to be a human invention. Now, how his allowing *us* to believe this, without breaking with us on that account, amounts to a dereliction of it, is a riddle which it would require an Œdipus to solve. May he not retain his sentiments and believe us in an error? and is not his continuing unbaptized a demonstrative proof that he does so? And while this is the case, and he manifests his opinion, both by words and actions, is he still guilty of this fearful surrender?

Besides, what will it avail him to leave our communion, since our opinion still pursues him; and though he should retire to the ends of the earth we shall still continue to think "he has not fulfilled the law of Christ in the very point in which he believes himself to have fulfilled it." There is no conceivable remedy; he must digest the affront as he can; but why he should feel it so insupportable only in the case of our proposing to "receive" him is passing strange, except the author supposes him to be of so canine a temper as to be the most dangerous when most caressed.

It is amusing to see the happy versatility of the author, and with what

dexterity he can adapt his viands to the taste and palate of every guest. When it was his object to load with all possible odium the conduct of the Baptists in admitting the members of other denominations, he professes to discern an essential disparity between their conduct and ours. We (he tells us) are "more to blame than the Pedobaptists that join with us: they surrender no principle; they do not unite with those whom *they* deem unbaptized."* He was then all intent on reproaching us; when he has to deal with the Pedobaptists he feels no scruple in awarding them the same measure. "The inquiry," he says, "will irresistibly arise, if they really and heartily believe that infant baptism is an institution of Christ, Why do they wish to unite with people by whom one of his institutions is, in their view, so manifestly opposed? How can they, in justice to their families, unite with Baptists?" "Let them," he says on another occasion, "consider whether they act wisely or *consistently* if they join with Baptists who receive them on these grounds. If, on their part, it is connected with a *sacrifice of principle*, they will confess that it is indefensible."† By these grounds he means, on the supposition that baptism is not an essential prerequisite to communion, which, he is aware, is the principle on which we rest our vindication, and which is certainly perfectly consistent with their conviction of *our* being baptized; the very circumstance he urged before as a proof that they *sacrificed no principle*.

From a writer who so palpably contradicts himself it were vain to expect any information on this branch of the subject, since it is impossible to conjecture whether the union of our Pedobaptist brethren does or does not involve a surrender of principle, in the judgment of him who affirms both. On impartial inquiry it will probably be found, that though no principle is violated on either side, as much candour is evinced on the part of Pedobaptists in consenting to a union as on ours. If we join with those whom we are obliged to consider as unbaptized, they unite with persons who, in their judgment, repeat an ordinance which ought to be performed but once, nullify a Christian institute, and deprive their children of the benefit of a salutary rite. And since the subjects of baptism are far more numerous on their system than on ours, why should they be less offended at our neglect of these than we are at their extending the ordinance too far? Whoever attaches importance to the covenant into which God is supposed to enter with the seed of believers must highly disapprove the conduct of the parent who withholds from his offspring its instituted seed; nor is it possible for him to cherish the esteem due to him as a Christian but by imputing his conduct to involuntary error. The supposed cruelty also of refusing to insert an innocent babe into the Abrahamic stock—the impiety of profaning a Christian sacrament by rebaptizing might be made the subject of tragic declamation with as much propriety as *their* want of "reverence to the authority of Christ, and disobedience to the laws of his house." If we must tolerate none who are guilty of omitting a divine law (which is the doctrine of Mr. Kinghorn), how is it possible for a Pedobaptist to bear with us,

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 68. † Ibid. p 114

who live in the perpetual neglect of what his principles compel him to consider in that light.

In the judgment of all other denominations, while we neglect to dedicate our offspring to God in the solemnization of a federal rite, however conscientious we may be, we can but very imperfectly imitate the example of Abraham, of whom the Omniscient testified that he "would command his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord;" or that of Zechariah and Elizabeth, "who walked in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless." On a fair comparison, it is difficult to determine which party is most entitled to the praise of candour; where both evince a noble oblivion of minor partialities and attachments, made to yield to the force of Christian charity, and disappear before the grandeur of the common salvation.

PART III.

IN WHICH THE INSUFFICIENCY OF THE REPLY MR. KINGHORN HAS MADE TO THE PRINCIPAL ARGUMENTS URGED FOR MIXED COMMUNION IS EXPOSED.

CHAPTER VII.

His Reply to the Argument deduced from the Scriptural Injunction of Mutual Forbearance and Brotherly Love considered.

Reluctant as the author is to prolong the present controversy to a tedious length, he can neither do justice to his cause nor to himself unless he notices the attempt which his opponent has made to enervate the force of his arguments: and here he will be under the necessity of recurring to the principal topics insisted upon in the former treatise.

That dissensions in the Christian church were not unknown in the earliest period of Christianity is evident from the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of St. Paul, who employed himself much in attempting to compose them; and the principal method he adopted was, to enjoin mutual forbearance, to inculcate the duty of putting the most favourable construction on each other's sentiments, and not suffer these differences to alienate their affections from each other, "whom Christ had received," who were his accepted servants, and would be permitted to share in his glory.* From these premises we argue thus: Since St. Paul assigned as a reason for the mutual forbearance of Christians, that they were equally accepted of Christ, it was undoubtedly a *sufficient* one, and, admitting it to be such, it must extend to all who are in the same predicament (who are in the same state of acceptance); and as it is allowed on both sides that Pedobaptists are in a state of salva-

* Rom. xiv. 1-6.

tion, and consequently accepted of Christ; the same reason which dictated the measure of toleration at that period must apply with equal force to the debate which at present subsists between us and other denominations. In this argument the conclusion seems so nearly identified with the premises, that we might suppose the most artful sophistry would despair of confuting it, and that the only objection it were liable to would be its attempting to prove what is self-evident.

Let us now turn to Mr. Kinghorn. It was observed in my former treatise, that the question is not, What were the individual errors we are commanded to tolerate? but, What is the *ground* on which that measure is enforced, and whether it be sufficiently comprehensive to include the Pedobaptists? After quoting this passage, he subjoins, "*this is the question at issue*, and the decision of this will determine whether the spirit of the precepts of the gospel will sanction us in departing from apostolical precedents, especially when such precedents arose from obedience to a Divine command."* He then proceeds to investigate the precise nature of the dissensions which prevailed in the primitive churches; from whence he infers, that the disparity between them and our controversy with the Pedobaptists is such, that the principle on which the apostles enforced toleration is not "applicable." The expression he here employs is somewhat equivocal. It may either mean, that the phrase "God hath received him," does not apply to the Pedobaptists, or that, supposing it does, it is not sufficient to sustain the inference we deduce, which is their right to fellowship. To interpret his meaning in the latter sense, however, would be to suppose him guilty of impeaching the validity of St. Paul's argument, who rests the obligation of forbearance with the party whose cause he advocates precisely on that ground. "*For* God hath received him." It is also inconsistent with his own statement, as given in the following passage, where he paraphrases the words just quoted in the following manner:— "There is nothing in the gospel but what the Jews can believe and obey, though they retain their national partialities to the law; and, therefore, since God does not reject them, but receives them into the Christian dispensation, you should receive them also. But then, he adds, he receives them on their *believing and obeying the gospel;* and it is neither stated nor supposed that he receives them, notwithstanding they disobey it. And unless this be proved, the cause of mixed communion is not promoted."† We have here an explicit avowal that he considers none besides the Baptists as received of Christ, in the sense the apostle intends, accompanied with a concession, that to prove they were would furnish an irrefragable argument for our practice.

It was certainly not without reason that he apologized for taking different ground from Mr. Booth; for here he is directly at issue with the venerable apologist. *He* frankly acknowledges the fact which Mr. Kinghorn challenges us to prove; but attempts to evade the conclusion by remarking, "that it is not every one is received of Jesus Christ who is entitled to communion at his table, but such, and such only, as revere his authority,"‡ &c. Amid the contradictory statements of such formi-

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 40. † Ibid. p. 45. ‡ Ibid. p. 62

dable champions, who can only agree in their censures of us, while they are at variance among themselves respecting the most fundamental points; where one tells us we are not to commune with other denominations, though they *are* received by Christ, and the other because they are *not* received, what course must he who looks up with profound veneration to these great authorities take? Where both propose to conduct him to the same place, but one directs him to the east, the other to the west, my humble advice is, to believe neither, but to exercise that liberty of thinking for himself to which he is strongly invited by the perplexity and confusion of his guides.

Our present concern, however, is with Mr. Kinghorn, who denies that Pedobaptists are received by Christ in the sense which St. Paul intended in the passage under consideration; while he agrees with us that it is upon that principle that primitive toleration rested.

Let it be remembered, that while Mr. Booth interprets the word *received* as signifying received into the Divine favour, Mr. Kinghorn contends for its meaning admitted into the church. But since many things must of necessity precede the act of external communion, and every believer must be supposed, in some important sense, to be previously received of Christ, he qualifies, or explains, his former language by adding, "he receives them into the Christian dispensation."*

Let me crave the indulgence of the reader, while we endeavour to sift this matter to the bottom.

1. Whatever disparity may be contended for between the ancient dissensions and the modern dispute with the Pedobaptists, it can by no means amount to a proof that the latter are *not* comprehended under the clause in question (God hath received him). To reason thus, there were certain errors among the primitive professors which did not bar their admission into the church, but the error of the Pedobaptist is of a very different kind, and therefore it must have that effect, would be to reason most inconclusively, since all that can be justly inferred is, that it possibly *may* have that effect, though the former had not. The utmost point to which the argument, from the dissimilarity of the two cases, is capable of being carried is, that the latter may possibly not be comprehended under the same rule; but whether our author has not disqualified himself from urging it will be the subject of future inquiry.

2. The medium by which he attempts to establish his conclusion is manifestly untenable, unless he chooses to retract a large portion of his treatise. His argument is this, that God receives "such, and only such, as believe and obey the gospel;" but *other denominations* disobey

* For the satisfaction of the reader who may not possess Mr. Kinghorn's book, it may be proper to give the whole passage to which my reply is directed.

"Besides, the expression, God hath received him, ver. 8, deserves consideration. It clearly applies, as it is stated by the apostle, to the reception of the gentiles; and is an argument with the Jewish Christians, not to reject those brethren who eat all things. And suppose it to be granted that the expression applies to both parties (which appears intended in chap. xv. 7), the sense, then, is evidently this, God receives not gentiles *only*, but *also* Jews into the Christian church, though they are encumbered with their Jewish prejudices. There is nothing in the gospel but what Jews can believe and obey, though they retain their national partialities to the law; and, therefore, since God does not reject them, but receives them into the Christian dispensation, you should receive them also. But then he receives them *on their believing and obeying the gospel*, and it is neither stated nor supposed that he receives them *notwithstanding they disobey it*. And unless this be proved, the cause of mixed communion is not promoted."—*Baptism a Term of Communion*, p. 45.

it, and are therefore not entitled to that privilege. Here, however, he is at issue with a greater than Booth—with the apostles themselves, one of whom declares that Christ "will appear in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that *obey not the gospel*;" and another classes such as *obey it not* among the "ungodly and sinners," whom he solemnly warns of their fearful end. Either, then, the apostles were wrong in denouncing destruction on such as *do not obey* the gospel, or Mr. Kinghorn in loading the Pedobaptists with that charge, while he expresses a confidence of their salvation. Nor will it avail him in the least to say they do not obey it perfectly; for we should feel no hesitation in retorting the charge, and affirming that had he done so he would not have penned this passage.

3. As he must, on his system, distinguish between being in a state of salvation and "*being received into the Christian dispensation*," there are a few questions to which we should be glad to receive an explicit answer. He will acknowledge, we presume, that every believer is first united to Christ, and received by him, before he is entitled to the external communion of his church; that his right to the latter is founded on the credible evidence he gives of his interest in the first of these privileges. If this be admitted, it must hold equally true respecting the Jewish and gentile converts, whose mutual toleration is enjoined in the passage under dispute. Now I ask, *according to what dispensation* were these primitive believers united to Christ, and accepted of him, *previous* to their external communion? Was it according to the Christian dispensation, or some other? If the reply is, the Christian; I ask again, are our Pedobaptist brethren in possession of the same privileges as were enjoyed by the primitive converts before their external communion with the church? If they are not, they are not entitled to the appellation of Christians in any sense, and consequently could not be admitted to communion, even though they were baptized. If, on the other hand, it is acknowledged that they are possessed of the same privileges, the question returns, *by what dispensation* are they held? If he denies it to be by the Christian, I ask once more, how he acquired this persuasion of their possessing the privileges in question? He surely will not pretend to have obtained it in any other way than by an attentive perusal of the New Testament, by comparing the character of pious Pedobaptists with that of the primitive Christians, as well as with the marks and criterions by which it has directed us to judge of a state of salvation; so that the favourable opinion he professes to entertain must rest on the evidence which the principles of the Christian dispensation supply. But to say that the maxims of that dispensation oblige him to believe that a class of persons are interested in its promises, whom that very dispensation does not comprehend, although they live under it, is a contradiction in terms. It is equivalent to asserting that the gospel economy passes opposite sentences on the same persons, and affords evidence for their seclusion and admission, at one and the same moment. It seems evident to a demonstration, then, that agreeable to his own concessions, *other denominations*, as well as our own, are received into the Christian dispensation; that by virtue of its essential principles

they are entitled to its immunities and privileges, and have consequently a right to the external communion of saints on a double account; first, because such communion is one of its distinguishing benefits, and next, because they are included among the persons whom the Head of the church has received, which our author interprets, by being admitted into the Christian dispensation.

For the same reason, all that he has said elsewhere of our not being authorized by the New Testament to recognise them as the disciples of Christ necessarily falls to the ground; for since he can have no pretence for believing them in a state of salvation, except on the information derived from the New Testament, which certainly promises salvation to none but Christ's disciples, we are not only allowed, but impelled by that highest authority to recognise them under that character. His attempt to nullify their profession is also rendered completely abortive: for, not to repeat what was before urged, since they profess neither more nor less than to adhere to the Christian dispensation, it will not be denied, that if they are actually received into it that profession is valid.

Let it be remembered, that in deducing these consequences we have allowed him to interpret the disputed phrase in his own way, without contending for the sense which is most agreeable to the context, as well as most favourable to our hypothesis; and without attempting to impugn the accuracy of his representation of the dissensions and disputes which occasioned the injunction, and gave scope to the exercise of primitive forbearance.

4. Though that inquiry might be well spared, without injury to our argument, yet his account of these ancient controversies is so egregiously partial, so palpably designed to serve an hypothesis, that truth forbids me to suffer it to pass without animadversion. In a long and perplexed dissertation, he endeavours to establish a distinction between indulging a needless scrupulosity in doing what is not commanded, and disobeying an express precept; contending that the errors which St. Paul tolerated were of the former sort, and that, as they merely respected certain observances and customs, neither forbidden nor enjoined, they were to be considered as ἀδιάφορα, things indifferent, about which the Christian religion is silent. He compares them to disputes about the planetary system, where it is free for every person to form his own judgment, and either to believe, with the vulgar, that the sun literally moves round the earth every four-and-twenty hours, or the earth round the sun, agreeable to the principles of modern astronomy.*

* "The case is very similar," he says, "to the following:—At no great distance of time back, the popular opinion was, that the earth was a fixed body, and that the sun and stars made not an apparent, but an actual revolution round the earth. The contrary appeared so unlikely, so contrary to daily observation, that numbers knew not how to admit it. Some reasoned; others took a shorter way, and laughed at what they thought was absurd; another party appealed to the Bible, as settling the point, by asserting that the sun *did* rise, and *did* set, and one distinguished day was commanded to stand still. Good men were to be found on both sides of the question. Suppose now that some serious characters in a Christian church, tenacious believers that the *earth stood still*, and that it was the *sun* that *moved*, had occasioned a little unpleasant controversy with some of their brethren that were better informed; and the latter, provoked at their remarks, were for excommunicating them, for want of sense, if not for want of religion, how fitly would the apostle's reasoning apply! It might be said exactly on these principles, these good men are not chargeable with breaking *any divine law*: their whole crime is, that they are bad astronomers, and talk nonsense; but 'God hath received them;' do you therefore receive them in the spirit of meekness and love"—*Baptism a Term of Communion*, p. 49, 50.

In order to elucidate the question before us, it will be proper briefly to state the different modes of proceeding adopted by the Jewish converts respecting the Mosaic ceremonies, at the earliest period of Christianity. That they were universally practised by believers of Jewish extraction is manifest from various parts of Scripture; and with respect to the church at Jerusalem, is expressly affirmed by St. James. "Thou seest, brother," said he, addressing Paul, "how many thousand Jews there are who believe, and they are all zealous for the law." The apostle of the gentiles, with all his zeal in the assertion of their liberties, conformed to them himself; partly from respect to the Jewish people, whom he was most anxious, by every lawful compliance, to conciliate, and partly from a tender consideration of the infirmities of his weaker brethren, not yet sufficiently confirmed in the freedom of the gospel. "To the Jews he became a Jew, that he might win the Jews." But while he displayed this amiable and condescending spirit, he never disguised his conviction that the obligation attached to the Mosaic rites was dissolved, and that the gospel was alone a perfect rule of faith and practice.

Thus far an attention to the law was justifiable, and founded on the most enlightened principles. Many, however, probably the great majority, proceeded a step further, and observed the legal ceremonies, not as the dictate of prudence or for the purpose of conciliation, but as matter of conscience, conceiving them to be still in force. These composed that class of believers who are denominated *weak*, whose infirmities the *strong*, Christians of a more enlightened order, were commanded to bear with. The error which these persons maintained was of serious magnitude; for in the very face of an inspired apostle, who affirmed the law of Moses to be abrogated and annulled by the advent of Christ, they still pertinaciously adhered to it as a matter of personal and indispensable obligation; and though they attempted to revive and perpetuate an antiquated system, an economy which the gospel had completely superseded, and which went by no circuitous route to impeach the sufficiency and perfection of the latter, their complete toleration was solemnly and repeatedly enjoined on their more enlightened brethren.

This error is compared by Mr. Kinghorn to an erroneous system of astronomy, and is consequently considered as totally indifferent. But how he could possibly believe this himself, or hope to obtrude it on the credulity of his readers, is astonishing. To attach the sanction of religion to a system which the Supreme Legislator had repealed—to scruple various kinds of meat, at the very moment that St. Paul was testifying the Lord Jesus had shown him that nothing was unclean of itself, and after Peter had proclaimed the vision by which he was instructed that the distinction of clean and unclean was abolished, betrayed a degree of superstitious weakness and pertinacity most foreign from a mistake on a merely scientific subject. Were a converted Jew at present to determine to adhere to the Mosaic ritual, I would ask Mr Kinghorn whether he would consider his conduct as entitled to the same indulgence as though he scrupled to adopt the Newtonian system of the universe?

Still he will reply that his error is of a different kind from that of the Pedobaptists; he is guilty of no omission of a revealed duty, while they set aside a positive institute of Christianity. It is by this distinction, and by this alone, that he attempts to evade the conclusion to which this example conducts us. There is nothing, however, in reason or in Scripture, from which we can infer that to omit a branch of duty not understood is less an object of forbearance than to maintain the obligation of abrogated rites. Let him assign, if he is able, a single reason why it is less criminal to add to than to take away from the law of Christ, to revive an obsolete economy than to mistake the meaning of a New Testament institute. How will he demonstrate will-worship to be less offensive to God than the involuntary neglect of a revealed precept? It is so much more difficult to prove than to assert, that we commend his discretion in choosing the easier task.

The above distinction is not only unfounded in the nature of things, it is at direct variance with the reasoning of Paul on the subject. He enjoins the practice of forbearance on the ground of the *conscientiousness* of the parties concerned, on the assumption, not only of their general sincerity, but of their being equally actuated in the very particulars in which they differed by an unfeigned respect to the authority of Christ; and as he urges the same consideration as the ground on which the toleration of both parties rested, it must have included a *something* which was binding on the conscience of each, whatever was his private judgment of the points in debate. The Jew was as much bound to tolerate the gentile as the gentile the Jew. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. He that observeth a day, observeth it to the Lord: he that observeth not a day, observeth it not to the Lord. He that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not; he that eateth, eateth to the Lord." Now in the judgment of the Jew still attached to the Mosaic rites, he who made no distinction of meats or of days must have been considered as violating or neglecting a precept still in force, or the injunction to refrain from judging him would have been devoid of meaning. He must have consequently been regarded by him in precisely the same light in which our Pedobaptist brethren are considered, that is, as violating, though not intentionally, a positive institute. Still St. Paul absolutely insists on the duty of forbearance; and arguing with him on his own principles, he tells him he has no authority whatever to "*judge*," or deem him unworthy of his fellowship, since he was accepted of Christ and acted with perfect good conscience in the particular which gave offence. I will leave the impartial reader to determine whether this is not a fair representation of Paul's reasoning, and whether, admitting this, it does not completely annihilate the distinction Mr. Kinghorn attempts to establish, and decide the present controversy as satisfactorily as if it had been penned for the purpose. It is scarcely possible to suppose he will stoop to avail himself of his only remaining subterfuge, by reminding us that in the instance before us the ordinance supposed to be violated was not a *Christian* one; since it is obvious that

the commands of God, supposing them still in force, are equally binding at whatever period they are promulgated or to whatever economy they belong.

It is not, be it remembered, by a peremptory decision of the controversy, or by assigning the victory to one in preference to the other, that the apostle attempts to effect a reconciliation. He endeavours to bring it about while each retains his peculiar sentiments; from which it is manifest that there was nothing in the views of either party which in his judgment formed a legitimate barrier to union. The attachment of the Jew to the observation of the legal ceremonies was not in his opinion a sufficient reason for refusing to unite with him by whom they were disregarded. But in this case, the forbearance which he enjoins was exercised towards a class of persons exactly in the same situation, as far as its principle is concerned, with the modern Pedobaptists, that is, towards persons who violated a precept which was still supposed to be in force; and this consequence equally results, whatever statement may be made of the precise object of Jewish toleration, whether it involved disputed practices among the Jews themselves, or the neglect of the Mosaic ritual by the gentiles. Hence, in whatever possible view the controversy may be considered, the apostle's treatment of it goes to the complete annihilation of the distinction between the observation of what *is not* and the neglect of what *is* commanded; since the *mutual* toleration which was prescribed embraced both.

There was a third description of Jews—who attempted to impose the yoke of ceremonies on gentiles, assuring them that "unless they were circumcised and kept the law of Moses they could not be saved." It was this which occasioned the convention of the apostles and elders with the church at Jerusalem, where it was solemnly decided that gentile converts should enjoy a perfect immunity from legal observances. This formal determination, however, was far from putting an end to the controversy: the efforts of Jewish zealots were probably repressed for a time, but they soon recovered their resolution, and artfully propagated their doctrines with great success in various quarters, and especially among the churches planted in Galatia. On this occasion Paul expressed himself with great vehemence, telling the Galatians that he "could wish that those who troubled them were cut off." By inculcating the law as an indispensable prerequisite to salvation, they annulled the grace of God, subverted the truth of the gospel, and impeached the sufficiency and validity of the great propitiation. The attempt to place the rites of an economy which, while it continued, was merely the shadow of good things to come upon a footing with the living eternal verities of the gospel, was in effect to obscure its lustre and debase its character. That no indulgence was shown towards the inventers and propagators of this pernicious heresy is admitted; but it is equally evident that he made a wide distinction between the deceivers and the deceived, between the authors and the victims of delusion. With the last of these he reasons, he expostulates; he warns them of the tendency of their errors, and expresses his apprehensions lest he had "bestowed upon them labour in vain." He indig

nantly asks, Who had bewitched them, that they should not obey the truth; that after beginning in the Spirit they should end in the flesh; and when they had been replenished with the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, return again to the weak and beggarly elements." But in the midst of these pointed reproofs, as they were not fully aware of the consequences of their defection, as they were not in a confirmed state of heresy, he continued to treat them with the tenderness of a father, without uttering a breath that might seem like a threat of excommunication.

5. We shall not content ourselves with this answer. We accept Mr Kinghorn's challenge, and engage to produce an instance of men's being tolerated in the primitive church who neglected an express command of Christ, and that of the highest moment. We must only be allowed to assume it for granted that the apostles were entitled by the highest right to be considered as members of the church which they planted and of which they are affirmed to be the foundation. These very apostles, however, continued for a considerable time to neglect the express command of their Master relating to a subject of the utmost importance. It will not be denied that he expressly directed them to go forth immediately after the descent of the Spirit, and to preach the gospel to every creature. Did they immediately attempt to execute this commission? From the Acts of the Apostles we learn that they did not; that for a considerable period they made no effort to publish the gospel except to the Jews, and that it required a new revelation to determine Peter to execute this order in its full extent, by opening the door of faith to the gentiles. But for the vision presented at Joppa, from all that appears, the preaching of the word would have been limited in perpetuity to one nation; and when Peter, moved by an immediate voice from heaven, began to impart it to Cornelius and his family, he was vehemently opposed by the church at Jerusalem. So far indeed were the primitive Christians from entering into the views of their divine Master, that when a "number of them were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, they went as far as Phœnicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the gospel to the Jews only." That highly-favoured people, elated with the idea of its religious pre-eminence, looked down with contempt on other nations, while it appropriated the kingdom of God to itself as its exclusive patrimony, without suspecting for a moment that it was the design of the Almighty to admit a different race of men to an equal participation of the same privileges. Under the influence of these prejudices, the first heralds of the gospel slowly and reluctantly imbibed its liberal and comprehensive spirit.

Nor is this the only instance in which Mr. Kinghorn himself will be found to approve of the toleration of such as have habitually neglected a positive command. The great majority of our own denomination, influenced principally by the writings of Gill and Brine, admirers of Crisp, held, till a very recent period, that it was improper to urge sinners to repentance, or to enjoin upon them the duty of believing on the

Lord Jesus Christ.* Their practice, it is needless to add, corresponded with their theory, and they anxiously guarded against the inculcation of any spiritual duties whatever on the unconverted. My respectable opponent is, I am aware, at a great remove from these sentiments; and that the reason he would assign for rejecting them is that our Saviour commenced his ministry by calling men to repent, and that "he commanded his apostles to testify everywhere repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." But if these be his reasons he must acknowledge that the eminent persons before mentioned, in declining to perform what our Lord commanded his apostles, neglected or broke a divine precept. But is he prepared to affirm that they were not members of the church? Will this sturdy champion of the strict Baptists be ungracious enough to pass a sentence of excommunication on the great majority of his precursors in this controversy? Unless he is prepared for this, he must acknowledge that the right of toleration extends to such as neglect or violate a revealed precept. It is unnecessary to remind the reader of the magnitude of the error in question, which would at once have annihilated the apostolic commission, by rendering it impossible to preach the gospel to *any creature*, since there were in the gentile world none to whom it could on this principle be addressed. The whole ceremony of baptism sinks into insignificance in the comparison.

In answer to his challenge we have produced two cases, in which toleration has been extended to such as neglect or violate a divine precept; the first taken from the holy apostles, the second from our fathers and predecessors in our own denomination.

The reader is requested to advert to the interminable discord and dissension with which this principle is replete. The principle is, that whenever one Christian deems another to live in the neglect and violation of a positive command, however conscientious and sincere, he must renounce the communion of the party which he supposes erroneous. Who does not perceive that the application of such a principle will furnish a pretext for endless dispute and contention; that not only a different interpretation of the law of baptism will be a sufficient occasion of division, but that whoever supposes that any branch of the primitive discipline has fallen into disuse, will feel himself justified, nay, compelled to kindle the torch of discord, and to separate chief friends? If no latitude is to be allowed in interpreting the will of Christ, no indulgence shown to such of the faithful who, from a deficiency of light, neglect and overlook some part of his precepts, how is it possible the practice of reciprocal exclusion should stop within the limits which this author has assigned it? Are there two thinking men to be found who are fully agreed respecting all the minuter details of Christian discipline and worship? Are they fully agreed on the question of what *was* the primitive discipline, much less how far a conformity to it is either proper or practicable? Who that is competent to speak on such subjects is

* It is but justice to the memory of the great and excellent Fuller to observe, that it is to his writings chiefly our denomination is indebted for its emancipation from these miserable shackles and restraints. The author might have added here the name of his excellent and venerable father.—Ed.

not aware, that there are no questions involved in greater obscurity than these, none on which the evidence is less satisfactory, and which more elude the researches of the learned, or administer more aliment of dispute to the contentious? One class of Christians believes that a plurality of elders is essential to the organization of a church, because the Scripture always speaks of them in the plural number; and confident that such is the will of Christ, he dares not recognise as a church one in which that circumstance is wanting. Another attaches importance to weekly communion, which he justly contends was the uniform practice of the apostles and of the primitive age: a conformity to which, in this particular, is with him an indispensable condition to communion. A third turns his eyes towards lay exhortations, the disuse of which he considers as practically superseding some of the plainest passages of Scripture, quenching the Spirit, and abridging the means of religious improvement; he consequently scruples the communion of those by whom this ordinance is neglected. A fourth adverts to the solemnity with which our Lord exemplified and enjoined the washing of feet, and the frequency with which the apostles inculcated the kiss of charity; and having no doubt that these injunctions are of perpetual obligation, feels himself necessitated to withdraw from such as by neglecting them "walk disorderly." A fifth contends for the total independence of churches, conceiving that the cognizance of ecclesiastical causes is, by divine right, vested in the people, who are to determine every thing by a majority of votes, in opposition to those who contend for a church representative; and believing such an arrangement to be an important branch of the will of Christ, he conscientiously refuses the communion of those societies which decline to adopt it.

These different systems are no doubt distinguished by different degrees of approximation to truth; but what is of importance to remark, however they may differ in other respects, they agree in this, that upon the principle we are attempting to expose, they furnish to such as adopt them just as reasonable a pretext for separate communion as the disagreement respecting baptism; nor is it possible, if that principle be admitted, to reconcile the independent exercise of intellect with Christian unity. The instances already adduced are a mere scantling of the innumerable questions which would give occasion to a diversity of judgment respecting the mind of Christ, and consequently necessitate the withdrawment of Christians from each other. The few societies who have attempted to carry this theory into practice have already exhibited such a series of feuds and quarrels as are amply sufficient to ensure its reprobation; and merely because they have acted more *consistently*, they have acted much worse than the greater part of the churches who practise strict communion. Let this principle be once established and fairly acted upon, and there is no question but that divisions will succeed to divisions, and separations to separations, until two persons possessed of freedom of thought will scarcely be found capable of walking together in fellowship; and an image of the infinite divisibility of matter will be exhibited in the breaking down of churches into smaller and smaller portions. An admirable expedient truly for

keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace! That there is no hyperbole in this representation will be obvious, if we do but consider the difficulty of procuring an entire unanimity in the interpretation of those parts of Scripture which are supposed to relate to the will of Christ in the organization and constitution of his church.

6. There is one important consideration to which the reader is requested to attend before we dismiss this branch of the subject. My opponent affirms, that none besides our own denomination are comprehended within the clause in which the apostle affirms the reception of erring Christians. He acknowledges, that if it can be proved that they are included under that description, the precept of toleration extends to their case, and that the only question at issue is, whether they *are* so or not, which he, in opposition to Mr. Booth, denies.* The reader is entreated seriously to consider the necessary result of this position, whether it does not amount to a repeal of the Scriptures, considered as the rule of faith and manners. It will not be denied that the promises and precepts of the New Testament are uniformly addressed to the same description of persons with those particular injunctions under present discussion, and that under the terms *strong* and *weak*, by which are designated the two respective classes who are commanded mutually to bear with each other. Nor can we hesitate whether the disputed phrase *God hath received him* ought to be interpreted in the same extent. As the inscriptions prefixed to the inspired epistles determine to whom they were addressed, so that which was written to the Romans is inscribed to "all that be at Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints;" and not a syllable is found in the precepts respecting mutual forbearance, comprised in the 14th and 15th chapters, which limits them to any particular part of that church in distinction from the whole. They were intended for the universal regulation of the conduct of the members of that community towards each other.

The epistles of the rest of the apostles also, though directed to the inhabitants of different places from that to the Romans, are uniformly ascribed to the same description of persons, as will be manifest on their inspection; or, in other words, the supposed genuine followers of Christ in that age are the persons to whom the epistolary parts of the New Testament are directed; and consequently universal precepts enjoined on any one society must have been considered as equally binding on all the faithful. On any other supposition, each church would have possessed a distinct code, instead of the inspired writings at large being regarded as the universal rule of faith and practice. Hence it follows that the seven churches of Asia, as well as those who were scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, and Cappadocia, supposing them acquainted with the Epistle to the Romans, would have been under the same obligation of observing its injunctions with the Christians at Rome. But

* The author of *Terms of Communion* observes, "that the question at issue is not, What were the individual errors we are commanded to tolerate—but, What is the ground on which that measure is enforced, and whether it be sufficiently comprehensive to include the Pedobaptists?" In reply to which Mr. Kinghorn sets out with remarking, "I admit *that is the question*, and the decision of this question will determine whether the precepts of the gospel will sanction us in departing from apostolical precedent," &c.

among the various precepts intended to regulate the conduct of Christians comprised in the code of inspiration, such as enjoin mutual forbearance with each other's imperfections and infirmities hold a conspicuous place, and the rule propounded on that occasion we perceive to have been universally obligatory on believers of that generation.

When we propose to extend the same method of proceeding to our Pedobaptist brethren, in the present day, we are repelled; and my opponent reminds us, that we are not authorized to assign, in the present case, the reason for forbearance which was urged by St. Paul, because *they are not received* in the sense which we intended. The reason itself, he acknowledges, would be a sufficient justification, could the fact on which it proceeds be established; but he denies the fact.

Their error, it is asserted, is of such a nature, that it places them totally out of the question, and whatever is said on the subject of mutual forbearance in the New Testament is, in the present state of things, to be considered as applicable merely to the conduct of Baptists towards each other; from which it necessarily follows, that no part of the precepts or promises of Scripture can be proved to apply to the great body of believers, at present, not even to such as appear pre-eminent in piety; for all these precepts and promises were originally addressed precisely to the same description of persons with the injunctions in question; and as it is contended that *these* belong at present only to Baptists, by parity of reason the former must be restricted to the same limits. On this principle there is not a syllable in the New Testament from which a Pedobaptist can derive either consolation or direction as a Christian; not a single promise which he can claim, nor a single duty resulting from the Christian calling with which he is concerned: for the class of persons to whom these were originally addressed was one and the same with those on whom the duty of mutual forbearance was inculcated.

The inscription of the Epistle to the Romans is of the same extent with the injunctions contained in the 14th and 15th chapters, and no greater; the same description of persons are evidently addressed throughout. It was the *saints*, the *beloved of God*, mentioned in the beginning of the letter, who, on account of their common relation to the Lord, were commanded to bear with each other's infirmities. Now if it be asserted that infant baptism is an error so different from those which were contemplated by the author, in that injunction, that its abetters stand excluded from its benefit, how will it be possible to prove that they are *saints*, that they are *beloved of God*, or that any of the attributes ascribed to Christians in that epistle, belong to *them?* Mr. Kinghorn may affirm, if he pleases, that the characteristic descriptions are applicable, while the injunctions under discussion are not. He may affirm, but how will he prove it? since both are addressed to the same persons, and the injunction of forbearance enjoined alike on them all.

From a letter, consisting partly of affectionate congratulations, and partly of serious advice, both intended for the comfort and direction of the same persons, to infer that the congratulations apply to Christians

of all denominations, and the advice to one only, is capricious and unreasonable. The same conclusion holds good respecting the whole of the New Testament. Whatever is affirmed in any part of it respecting the privilege of primitive believers was asserted primarily of such only as were baptized, because there were no others originally in the church: all the reciprocal duties of Christians were, in the first instance, enjoined on these; among which we find precepts enforcing, without a shadow of limitation, the duty of cultivating Christian fellowship. But the last, our opponents contend, are to be restricted to Baptists; whence it necessarily follows, unless we had some independent evidence on the subject, that the former must be restricted in the same manner; and that, consequently, all other denominations, however excellent in other respects, are left without any scriptural proof of their interest in the Divine favour, or any directions for that part of their conduct which concerns their Christian obligations. Were there, indeed, any other medium of proof besides the writings of the apostles, of equal authority, by which it were possible to supply their deficiency, the case would be different. From this independent source we might possibly learn the fact, that *other denominations* also were included within the promise of eternal life; but while our knowledge on the subject is derived from one book, whose precepts for the regulation of the conduct of believers towards each other universally are affirmed not to extend to our intercourse with Pedobaptists, it is impossible to establish that conclusion; for to attempt to limit the application of Scripture in one part, and to make it universal in another, where both were originally intended to be taken in the same extent, is plainly unreasonable.

CHAPTER VIII.

On the Argument for Mixed Communion, founded on the Pedobaptists being a Part of the true Church.

The author of *Terms of Communion* founded an argument for the admission of sincere Christians of every denomination to the Lord's table on their being a part of the true church. He remarked, that whenever that term occurs in Scripture, in relation to spiritual matters, it constantly denotes either members of a particular community, accustomed to meet in one place; or the whole body of real believers, dispersed throughout the world, but considered as united to one head, that this body is expressly affirmed to be the body of Christ, of which every genuine believer is a member; that we are seriously warned against whatever tends to promote a schism in it; and that these admonitions are directly repugnant to the practice, under any pretext whatever, of repelling a sincere Christian from communion. If we allow the identity of the church of Christ with his body, which St. Paul expressly affirms, and which he assumes as the basis of his whole

gram of reasoning, the conclusion we have drawn results from it so immediately, that the attempt to place it in a clearer light seems a waste of words. If the alienation of affection which prevailed in the church at Corinth was sufficient to constitute a schism, much more a rupture of communion. But a schism, or division in the body, the apostle deprecates as one of the greatest evils, as tending immediately to its destruction, as well as most repugnant to the scope and genius of Christianity. "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided?"* "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ." Here the unity of the church is most clearly affirmed; and whatever tends to divide it is stigmatized under the notion of an attempt to divide Christ himself.

The reader will probably feel some curiosity to know how Mr. Kinghorn will reconcile his hypothesis with these statements; whether he is prepared, in contradiction to the apostle, to deny the identity of the church of Christ with his body, or whether, acknowledging this, he will yet contend for the necessity of dividing it, in opposition to his solemn injunctions. He will be a little surprised at finding that he makes no reply whatever: that he is speechless, and without attempting to rebut the argument, turns aside to other subjects, on which he contents himself with repeating what he has already asserted times without number. For what purpose he announced his intention to discuss this topic it is not easy to conjecture; unless he flattered himself with the hope of finding some good-natured readers, who would give him credit for having done what he avowed his intention of performing. Be this as it may, not a word escapes him throughout the chapter from which it is possible to learn whether he considers Pedobaptists as a part of the church or not, the affirmation or denial of which is essentially involved in the discussion.

The only answer he attempts to the preceding reasoning is included in an assertion, the fallacy of which has already been amply exposed. "Once take away the obligation," saith he, "of conforming to the will of Christ, and the Reformation is declared a mischievous insurrection, in which all parties are involved in aiding and abetting a needless and schismatical project. But if it be right to leave good men because they have left Jesus Christ, it is right not to admit his terms till they come to them."† To which it is sufficient to reply, that to leave good men, that is, to refuse to join with them in those particulars in which we suppose them to have deviated from the will of Christ, is the necessary dictate of allegiance; but to refuse to walk with them, as far as we are agreed, to repel them from our communion on account of errors and corruptions, in which we are under no necessity of participating, is a very different affair; it is an assumption of infallibility, and a deliberate invasion of the rights of conscience.

The logical force of Mr. Kinghorn's conclusion is exactly on a footing

* 1 Cor. i. 12, 13. † Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 55.

with that of the following argument. If it be right to leave my friend when he repairs to the gaming-table, it is right not to admit him into my house till he has relinquished the practice of gaming. If I must not go with him to the theatre, I must renounce all sort of intercourse with him until he has abandoned theatrical amusements; a conclusion to which a stern moralist may easily be supposed to arrive, but which no correct reasoner will attempt to deduce from these premises.

That the mystical body of Christ is *one* and *one* only, and that all sincere believers are members of that body, is so clearly and unequivocally asserted in the sacred Scriptures, that it would be trifling with the reader to enter into a formal proof of a proposition so obvious and so undeniable. The wildest heretical extravagance has never proceeded so far as to ascribe two or more mystical bodies to the same Head, or to deny that Christ is, in that character, really and virtually united to all the faithful. It is equally certain that the term church, whenever it is applied to denote the whole number of believers diffused over the face of the earth, is identified in Scripture with the body of Christ. The church is in more passages than one affirmed to be his body. "He is the head of the body, the church. Who now rejoice," saith St. Paul, "in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, *for his body's sake, which is the church.*"*

In the language of Scripture, two classes of men only are recognised, believers and unbelievers, the church and the world; nor is it possible to conceive in consistency with the dictates of inspiration of a third. All who are in Christ are in a state of salvation; all who belong to the world, in a state of spiritual death and condemnation. "The former are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ; the latter, the *whole world*, lieth in the wicked one." If we allow ourselves to imagine a description of persons, who, though truly sanctified in Christ and united to him as their head, are yet no parts of his church, we adopt a utopian theory, as unfounded and extravagant as the boldest fictions of romance. It is the church, and that only, if we believe the inspired writers, which "Christ so loved as to give himself for it, that he might sanctify it and cleanse it;" it is that alone which "he will present to himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle."*

It is strange that Mr. Kinghorn should not explicitly inform us whether Pedobaptists are or are not to be considered as a part of this universal church. This he ought certainly to have done, or have declined entering on a branch of the controversy which he must be aware hinges entirely on that point. If they are admitted to be a part of his church and he still contends for their exclusion, this is formally to plead for a schism in the body; it is to justify the forcible separation of one member from another, and to destroy the very idea of its unity. On this principle, the pathetic exhortations to perfect co-operation and concord, drawn from the beautiful analogy between the mystical and natural body insisted upon in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, are completely superseded; and one member, instead of being prohibited from saying to

* Col. i. 10, 23 Ephes. v. 23, 30, 32. 1 John iii. 19, 20. Ephes. v. 27

another, "I have no need of thee," is taught to shrink from the contact as a contamination. Whenever we are invited to concur in practices which we esteem erroneous or corrupt, our refusal to comply is justified by a principle the most obvious and the most urgent, the previous obligation of obeying God rather than man; but if we object to a transient act of communion with a member of the body of Christ on account of those errors or corruptions in which we are not called to participate, we are guilty of dividing that body. The reason of my adverting to a *transient* act is, that I am supposing the cause of separation to rest with us, and that a member of a different community proposes merely to unite in an occasional commemoration of the ineffable love of the Redeemer, without either a formal renunciation of the peculiarities of his sect or an attempt to introduce them. In such circumstances occasional fellowship is all that can be looked for; the adoption of different modes of worship, a predilection for different rites and ceremonies will naturally dispose him to prefer a permanent union with professors of his own persuasion. While in the mutual intercourse of such societies a disposition to recognise each other as Christians is cultivated, the unity of the body is preserved, notwithstanding their disagreement in particular points of doctrine or of discipline. Owing to a diversity of judgment respecting the proper organization of churches, obstacles, at present invincible, may prevent their incorporation; and it is left to the conscience of each individual to determine to which he will permanently unite himself. An enlightened Christian will not hesitate for a moment in declining to join with that society, whatever be the piety of its individual members, in which the terms of communion involve his concurrence in religious observances, of whose lawfulness he entertains any doubt. Hence arises in the present state of religion an impassable barrier to the perfect intercommunity of Christian societies. But it is not upon *this ground* that my opponent objects to the practice for which we are contending. He rests his refusal to commune with members of other denominations on the principle of their not being entitled to be *recognised as Christians*. He protests against a union with them, not on account of any erroneous or superstitious observances with which the act of fellowship is necessarily combined, but considers them as personally disqualified. His hypothesis is indeed so wild and incoherent that it is difficult to state it with accuracy, or to preserve a steady conception of it in the mind. According to his theory the Pedobaptists occupy a station the most anomalous and extraordinary that ever entered the human imagination. Many of them are genuine believers, of whose exalted piety he avows the fullest conviction, yet they are not to be *recognised as Christians;* they are members of the mystical body of Christ, or they could derive from him no saving influence or benefit, yet are excluded from all the advantages resulting from the union and co-operation of the several parts of which it consists; and though, as a portion of the mystical body, it is impossible to deny them a place in the *one catholic* or *universal* church, yet it is the duty of every particular church to disown and exclude them. In short, the great majority of the sincere followers of the Saviour, whose names are written in the

book of life, are totally disqualified for performing the duties and enjoying the privileges which distinguish the church from the world, between which they occupy some intermediate place, some *terra incognita*, whose existence it is as difficult to ascertain as the *limbus patrum*, or a mansion in the moon. In the present state of the Christian church, that extensive portion of the New Testament which was designed to cement the affections and to regulate the conduct of the faithful towards each other is superseded; its precepts are in a state of suspension and abeyance, and in the midst of Egyptian darkness which envelopes the Christian world, the Baptists alone dwell in the light of another Goshen. However strange these positions may appear, they form but a part of the absurdities which necessarily flow from our author's theory; nor is there any possible way of evading them but by denying that Pedobaptists belong to the mystical body of Christ, or demonstrating the consistency of their exclusion with the union and co-operation which St. Paul enjoins; or by asserting the existence of more mystical bodies than one, destined to subsist apart.

CHAPTER IX.

The Injustice of the Exclusion of other Denominations considered as a Punishment.

In the treatise *On Terms of Communion* it was urged, that as exclusion from the communion of the church is the highest ecclesiastical censure which it is possible to inflict, it can only be justified on the supposition of a proportional degree of demerit in the objects of it. If the moral turpitude inherent in the practice of infant baptism is of an order which entitles it to be compared to the habitual indulgence of vice or the obstinate maintenance of heresy, it is but fit it should be placed on the same level and subjected to the same treatment; but if the understanding and the heart equally revolt at such a comparison, that method of proceeding must be allowed to be unjust. To this our author replies by denying the propriety of applying the term *exclusion* to a bare refusal of admission. "Words," he informs us, "must strangely have altered their meaning before such an application of the phrase in question can be justified." To be compelled to dispute about the meaning of terms is always humiliating, but that his assertion is unfounded is sufficiently evident from the authority of the most eminent critics. Our great lexicographer, under the word *exclude*, defines it thus: "to shut out, to hinder from entrance or admission;" *exclusion* he defines "the act of shutting out or denying admission." Thus much for his accuracy as a grammarian. Let us next examine his reasoning.

He denies that the act of debarring every other denomination from admission is a *punishment*—"it is not considered as such by sensible Pedobaptists."* But why is it not? Solely because the Baptist socie-

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 60

ties are too few and too insignificant to enable them to realize the effects of their system in its full extent. Their principle involves an absolute interdict of church privileges to the members of every other community, but being an inconsiderable minority, there are not wanting numerous and respectable societies who stand ready to give a welcome reception to the outcasts and to succour the exiles. That their rejection is not followed by its natural consequence, a total privation of the communion of saints, is not to be ascribed in the smallest degree to the liberality or forbearance of our opponents, but solely to their imbecility. The celebration of the Eucharist they consider as null and void when attended to by a Pedobaptist; his approach to the table is absolutely prohibited within the sphere of their jurisdiction; and should their principles ever obtain a general prevalence, the commemoration of the love of a crucified Saviour would become impracticable, except to persons of their own persuasion. Instances have often occurred where the illiberal practice against which we are contending has been felt to be a punishment of no ordinary severity; where eminently holy men have been so situated that the only opportunity they possessed of celebrating the passion of the Redeemer has been withheld, and they have been compelled most reluctantly to forego one of the most exalted privileges of the church; nor has it ever been known that compassion for the peculiar hardship of the case was suffered to suspend the unrelenting severity of the sentence. Let me ask the advocates for the exclusive system whether they would be moved for a moment to extend their indulgence to a solitary individual who differed from them on the subject of baptism, although he was so circumstanced as to render a union with other classes of Christians impossible?

This writer affirms it is not *intended* as a punishment by the Baptists, and strongly remonstrates against the confounding it with the sentence of excommunication on account of immoral delinquency. He concurs with the author of *Terms of Communion* in admitting that in these instances its "accordance with the moral nature of man may and does give it authority and weight; in such an instance as the incestuous person at Corinth it becomes an instrument of punishment. He was *in* the church, and could be expelled *from* it. But which way the censure or punishment of excommunication and expulsion can take place in one who never was in a society, the strict Baptists," he tells us, "have yet to learn."*

In reply to this I shall not descend to a tedious logomachy, further than just to remark that this writer has, on this occasion, fallen into a similar error respecting the meaning of words with his former. Excommunication is synonymous with exclusion, and is defined by the highest authority, "an ecclesiastical interdict; exclusion from the fellowship of the church."† The punishment it involves is exactly proportioned to the value of the privilege it withholds; and therefore, to affirm that it is not a punishment is equivalent to the assertion that the fellowship of the church is not a benefit. To withhold privileges and immunities from him who is legally entitled to their possession must

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 60. † See Johnson.

be supposed to be felt with a severity proportioned to the justice of his title, and the magnitude and extent of his privations.

By refusing to admit a Pedobaptist to the privilege of communion with *us*, we in fact affirm his incompetence to commune anywhere; we deprive him, as far as our influence extends, of all the advantages which result from the fellowship of the saints; and that he is not reduced to the situation of an outcast and an exile from the church is in no degree to be imputed to the lenity of our decision, but to the limitation of our power. It is surely not necessary to multiply words to prove that the equity of every judicial sentence must be ascertained by considering it as it is *in itself*, by exploring its tendency, not by adverting to a fortuitous concurrence of circumstances, which may possibly mitigate or extinguish the evils with which it is fraught. In the present instance, we must, in order to form an accurate judgment, make the supposition, that the sentence of excommunication actually operates in its full extent, so as to deprive the subject of it of all the consolation and benefit resulting from the union of Christians; we must suppose that no asylum is left to which he can retreat, no community remaining where he can hide his humiliation and his shame. For that there is any is solely to be ascribed to the prevalence of a system which our opponents are accustomed to stigmatize as erroneous, and for the existence of which it is not to be imagined therefore they will assume to themselves the smallest credit. Let us imagine, what Mr. Kinghorn will, probably, be among the first to anticipate, that the sentiments of the Baptists triumphed to such an extent as to be embraced by dissenting churches in general, and that the opposite views were retained only by a few individuals; let us suppose one of the latter description to possess the zeal, the humility, the devotion of a Brainerd, and that, on account of his being unable to perceive the nullity of infant baptism, he was shut out from every religious society within his reach, though acknowledged to possess an elevation of character which threw the virtues of others into the shade; would there be no hardship, no injustice in this case? Would it be sufficient to silence the murmurs of indignation to remark, that it was not *intended as a punishment*, that he had nothing to complain of; for "as he was never *in* the church, he could not be expelled *from* it?" Would such cold and trivial subtleties, were they as correct as they are erroneous, quell the instinctive cry of justice, demanding a satisfactory reason for placing the friend and the enemy of God, the devoted servant of Christ and the avowed despiser of the great salvation, on the same level, and comprehending them in one and the same sweeping censure? If these characters are totally opposed, not merely by the contrast exhibited between the vices of the world and the virtues it is most prone to admire, but in consequence of the possession by one of the parties of supernatural and sanctifying grace, where is the equity of confounding them together by the interdict of religious privileges? and if the door is opened, at the same time, for the admission into the church of persons of a character decidedly inferior, how can impartial justice be asserted to hold the scale, and determine the merits of the respective candidates;—justice, whose office it is to

appreciate the rival claims of competitors, and to impart to every one his due? The iniquity of such a mode of procedure is so obvious and striking, that it is no wonder we find our opponents exert their ingenuity to the utmost in attempting to palliate and disguise it, though the issue of their attempts is only to plunge them deeper in perplexity and contradiction.

The author of *Terms of Communion* had remarked, "that there was no difference with respect to the present inquiry between the refusal of a candidate and the expulsion of a member, since nothing could justify the former of these measures which might not be equally alleged in vindication of the latter. *Both* amount to a declaration of the parties being unworthy to communicate." To this Mr. Kinghorn replies by observing, that "in one case the party is declared unworthy from *moral delinquency*; in the other he is not declared *unworthy*, but *unqualified*." Here it is plainly conceded that Pedobaptists are not refused on a *moral* ground; whence it necessarily follows, that even supposing they were acquitted from all blame in practising infant baptism, their exclusion would still be justifiable. They are not repelled from the sacrament, it seems, on account of any breach of duty of which they are guilty; for to assert this would be to contradict himself, by resting their exclusion on their *moral delinquency*. They incur the forfeiture of all the privileges of the church for no fault whatever; and whether they be perfectly free from blame or not in the adoption of an unauthorized rite is a consideration totally foreign to the question, and it is not to be taken into the account in assigning the reasons for their non-admission. Let the reader seriously ponder this extraordinary concession; let him ask himself whether he is prepared to believe, that, in consistence with the genius of the gospel, the most extensive forfeiture of religious immunities can be incurred without guilt, and the heaviest ecclesiastical censure inflicted on the innocent. He will doubtless reject such a supposition with unmingled disgust: he will feel no hesitation in deciding that the error which prohibits a church from *recognising* the person to whom it is ascribed *as a Christian*, which Mr Kinghorn expressly applies to infant baptism, must incur a high degree of culpability in the eyes of him who judgeth righteous judgment.

The glaring inconsistency of this whole statement with the preceding assertions of the same writer is palpable and obvious. He entirely concurs with Mr. Booth in characterizing Pedobaptists as persons "who do not revere Christ's authority, submit to his ordinances, nor obey the laws of his house." But will he attempt to distinguish this charge from that of moral delinquency? Again, quoting the declaration of St. Paul, that "the kingdom of God consists in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," he adds, "now as far as the kingdom of God consists in *righteousness*, it must include obedience to practical precepts, both moral and positive.* We have an eminent instance of submission to John's baptism being called righteousness by our Lord." But if the Pedobaptists are justly chargeable with want of *righteousness*, and on that account are not entitled to Christian fellowship, they must certainly

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 46.

be excluded on the ground of *moral delinquency*. If, on the other hand, the deficiency of righteousness involved in the practice of infant baptism is not sufficient to justify such a treatment, the reasoning in the above passage is utterly futile. By denying that they are excluded on the ground of *moral delinquency*, at the same time that he imputes to them conduct highly criminal, he has involved himself in inextricable difficulties; since, supposing it could be proved to a demonstration that they did "not revere the authority of Christ," &c., he has deprived himself of the power of urging it in vindication of his system, by protesting against the supposition of his resting its operation on moral considerations. But if no guilt is implied in these charges, why are they adduced? and if there be, how is that to be distinguished from moral delinquency? He tells us they are not *unworthy*, but only *disqualified;* whence it follows, that, in his opinion, he may be worthy of communion who "does not revere the authority of Christ;" nor would it be possible to dispute his title, were he but *qualified*.

In adopting this system, he professes to obey the directions and to imitate the conduct of the Supreme Legislator, whom he affirms not to have received the unbaptized into the gospel dispensation. If this profession is sincere, he surely will not deny that it is his intention to proceed on the same grounds, and act from the same motive, with the great Head of the church.

But when, by refusing to admit them into the Christian dispensation, he virtually declares them *disqualified*, which is the doctrine of this writer, is it under the character of *innocent persons*, or of delinquents? Will he affirm that the benefits of that economy are withheld from any who have, by no act, deserved that privation? Is the sentence by which their disqualification is incurred capricious and arbitrary, or is it merited? To say it is not would be impious; and to affirm that it *is* is to contradict himself, by founding it, after all, on moral considerations, or, which is perfectly equivalent, on "moral delinquency."

The distinction, then, which he has attempted to establish between being *unworthy* and being *disqualified* is perfectly nugatory; and the persons to whom it is applied, though they may not be *unworthy* in other respects, must be acknowledged to be such, on account of that particular instance of disobedience for which they are disqualified. Their disobedience places them on a footing with other classes of delinquents, by shutting them out from the communion of saints. They incur the same forfeiture, and for the same general reason, want of practical compliance with the will of Christ. They are defective, to use this author's own language, in the *righteousness* of the kingdom; and, though they possess faith, they fail in exhibiting obedience.

The objections formerly urged against this system consequently return in their full force. Since the exclusion of Pedobaptists must, after every possible evasion, be founded on their supposed demerits, if these are necessarily and intrinsically equal to the moral imperfections which are tolerated in Baptist societies, it is just. If among the millions who have practised infant baptism, the most eminent saint whom past ages have produced is to be considered as more criminal on

that account than the crowd of imperfect Christians whom we admit without scruple into our churches, the charge of injustice must be relinquished. Unless this can be sustained, it remains undiminished and unimpaired.

The method by which Mr. Kinghorn attempts to parry this reasoning is a recurrence to his old sophism, which consists of confounding together things totally distinct, namely, a refusal to *partake* in objectionable rites, with the exclusion of such as embrace them from our communion. Here he takes occasion to affirm that the same objection may be made to our secession from the Romish as from the established church.*

Did we repel men of unquestionable piety on account of their avowed attachment to the peculiarities of a sect or party, there would be a propriety in identifying our practice with that of our opponents; for in that case we should both act on the same principle. But in refusing to join in a communion, accompanied by appendages which we conscientiously disapprove, we proceed on a totally *different* ground. We recede just as far as a moral necessity dictates, and no farther. Nor is it true, as this writer asserts, that this mode of proceeding implies as severe a censure on the societies from which we dissent, as the practice which we are opposing inflicts on Pedobaptists. He who conceives that the posture of kneeling is an unauthorized innovation on the primitive mode of celebrating the Eucharist must necessarily dissent from the church which prescribes it: but will it be affirmed that his doing so implies a conviction that the adherents to that rite are universally disqualified for fellowship, that they are not entitled to be acknowledged Christians, or that they are so deficient in the *righteousness* in which the kingdom of God consists, as to invalidate their profession, and exclude them from the Christian dispensation? But these are the charges urged against the Pedobaptists. Let the smallest error imaginable be so incorporated with the terms of communion, that an explicit assent to it is implied in that act; and he who discerns it to be an error must, if he is conscientious, dissent, and establish a separate communion: but are there any prepared to assert that this is precisely the same thing as to repel the person who embraces it from the Lord's table? I am weary and ashamed of being under the necessity of occupying the reader's attention with the exposure of such obvious fallacies. Suffice it to remark, once for all, that our dissent from the establishment is founded on the necessity of departing from a communion to which certain corruptions, in our apprehension, inseparably adhere; while we welcome the pious part of that community to that celebration of the Eucharist which we deem unexceptionable. We recede from *their* communion from neces-

* "The imposition of rites," says Mr. Kinghorn, "which Christ has not commanded, and the combination of those sentiments with the structure of the church, which we think injurious to its nature and contrary to the will of the Lord, have rendered it necessary for us to establish *a separate communion*. Here the fact is that we feel ourselves called upon to say, that we can have no fellowship with them in communion at the Lord's table. On this ground it would be a very easy thing to represent the conduct of Protestants and of Protestant dissenters in the same dark colouring as Mr. Hall has applied to the strict Baptists. Let a man of talent exclaim against them for departing from the *true church*, and represent their conduct in establishing a communion of their own as declaring in the strongest form that they deem others unworthy of their society, and that in so doing they pronounce the sentence of expulsion, &c., and he will do no more than Mr. Hall has done in the whole of this part of his reasoning."—*Baptism a Term of Communion*, p. 63.

sity, but we feel no scruple in admitting them to *ours;* while our strict brethren reject them, as well as every other description of Pedobaptists, altogether. On him who has not discernment to perceive, or candour to acknowledge, the difference between these methods of proceeding, all further reasoning would be wasted.

One more evasion must be noticed before we conclude this part of the subject. "The Pedobaptists are represented as chargeable with nothing more than a *misconception* of the nature of a positive institute. But this, it is observed, is *not* the question before us: the present controversy relates to the *institute itself.* It is *not* whether the members of a church have fully and properly conceived the nature of the institute to which they have submitted. If this were the case, we might be represented as expelling the ignorant and the weak, instead of instructing and encouraging them. But it is, whether an institute delivered by Christ is to be maintained, or to be given up."*

To this I reply, The advocates of infant baptism are either sincerely of opinion that the rite in question ought to be extended to infants, or they are guilty of prevarication. If there be any of the last description to be found, they are entirely out of the question; for, supposing their character ascertained, they have never been contemplated as proper objects of toleration. With respect to the former, who sincerely believe it was the intention of our Lord to extend the rite of baptism to the infant seed of believers, is it possible for them to act otherwise than they do? With what then are they chargeable, except with a misconception of a positive institute? And if we are not to repel the ignorant and the weak, we must either affirm that they are not ignorant in this particular, and thus accuse them, contrary to the supposition of wilful prevarication, or we must tolerate them. Though we are far from insinuating that our Pedobaptist brethren are in general either ignorant or weak, yet as ignorance and weakness are undoubtedly adequate to the production of any *misconception*, on the subject of religion not fundamental, they will consequently account for the error which has given birth to infant baptism; and just as far as it is capable of being ascribed to this source, its abetters are, by our author's concession, objects of forbearance. And since there is no medium, but all Pedobaptists, however discerning in other respects, must either be supposed ignorant in this particular, or to prevaricate, forbearance must be extended to as many of them as are deemed sincere; beyond which we are as unwilling to extend it as he is. While they entertain their present views on the subject of baptism, they must either administer it to infants, or violate the dictates of conscience; and therefore, if they are *chargeable* with any thing more than a *misconception*, the matter of that charge must be deduced from their acting like upright men; an accusation which we hope, for the honour of human nature, will proceed from none but strict Baptists.

The sum of what has been advanced on this head is, that the privation of communion is an evil exactly proportioned to the value of that benefit; that as far as the tendency of the exclusive system is con

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 65.

cerned, and to the utmost power of its abetters, the evil is extended to every denomination except one; that it is either inflicted on account of *moral delinquency* or is utterly unmerited; since, if that ground be relinquished, their exclusion must be asserted to be just, even supposing them perfectly innocent; that whatever *blame* may be imputed bears no proportion to that which incurs the forfeiture of the same privilege in other instances; nor to the faults and imperfections which are daily tolerated without scruple; and, finally, since the practice which is treated with so much severity is the necessary result of a *misconception* of the nature of a positive institute, which is only another name for ignorance or weakness in that particular, to make it the pretext of expulsion or excommunication is repugnant to the maxims even of our opponents.

CHAPTER X.

On the Contrariety of the Maxims and Sentiments of the Advocates of Strict Communion to those which prevailed in the early Ages; in which the Innovation imputed to them by the Author is vindicated from the Charge of Misrepresentation.

In order to comprehend the true state of the question, as it respects the practice of Christian antiquity, it may be convenient to distribute it into three periods; the first including the time during which correct sentiments on the subject of baptism universally prevailed; the second that in which a gradual transition was made from the practice of adult to that of infant baptism; the third the period in which the latter obtained a general and almost undisputed ascendency.

On the first of these periods little need be said. Where there are no dissimilar elements, there can be no mixture; and therefore to affirm that the practice we are contending for was unknown in the earliest ages of the Christian church is little more than an identical proposition. While no demur or dispute subsisted respecting either the form or the application of the baptismal rite, a punctual compliance with it was expected and enforced by the presidents of Christian societies, for precisely the same reason which suggested a similar mode of proceeding to the apostles. It was a part of the will of Christ, in the interpretation of which no division of opinions subsisted among the faithful. The next period is that during which an innovation was gradually introduced by extending the ceremony in question to infants—a period which, from the commencement of the third unto the close of the fourth, probably comprehended the space of two centuries. Supposing the modern practice to have been first introduced towards the end of the second or the beginning of the third century, which corresponds to the time at which it is distinctly noticed by Tertullian, the first writer who explicitly mentions it, we cannot suppose a shorter space was requisite to procure it that complete establishment and ascendency which it possessed in the time of St. Austin. During that long interval, there must

have been some who still adhered to the primitive practice, and others who favoured and adopted the more recent innovations; there must, in other words, have been Baptists and Pedobaptists contemporary with each other. What became of that portion of the ancient church which refused to adopt the baptism of infants? Did they separate from their brethren in order to form distinct and exclusive societies? Of this not the faintest trace or vestige is to be found in ecclesiastical history; and the supposition is completely confuted by the concurrent testimony of ancient writers to the universal incorporation of orthodox Christians into one grand community. We challenge our opponents to produce the shadow of evidence in favour of the existence during that long tract of time of a single society of which adult baptism was the distinguishing characteristic. Tertullian, it is acknowledged, is the first who distinctly and unequivocally adverts to the contrary practice: and as he expresses disapprobation of it at the same time, without the remotest intimation of the propriety of making it the ground of separation, he must be allowed to form one instance of the practice of mixed communion; and unless we are disposed to assert that the modern innovation in the rite of baptism supplanted the original ordinance at once, multitudes must have been in precisely the same situation. We well know, that in the latter period of his life he *did* secede from the orthodox Catholic church, but we are equally certain that he was moved to this measure, not by his disapprobation of infant baptism, but solely by his attachment to the Montanists.

We, therefore, offer our opponents the alternative either of affirming that the transition from the primitive to the modern usage was sudden and instantaneous, in opposition to all that observation suggests respecting the operations of mind, or of acknowledging that for two centuries the predecessors of the present Baptists unanimously approved and practised a mixed communion—a communion in which Baptists and Pedobaptists united in the same societies.

Thus it appears that the system we are advocating, instead of being, as Booth and Kinghorn assert, a "modern invention," was introduced as early as it was possible—as early as the dissimilar materials existed of which the combination under discussion is formed. It is evident that no sooner did a difference of opinion on the subject of baptism arise than the system of forbearance recommended itself at once to all who adhered to the sentiments of the modern Baptists throughout every part of the world; and that it is the opposite principle which has to contend with all the odium and suspicion attached to recent innovations.

When we descend to the third period we are presented with a new scene. After the commencement of the fourth century down to the era of the Reformation, the baptism of infants was firmly established, and prevailed to such an extent that few traces of the ordinance in its primitive state are to be discerned. Many of the Waldenses, however, are judged with great appearance of evidence to have held opinions on that subject coincident with those by which we, as a denomination, are distinguished. By their persecutors of the Romish community they are usually stigmatized and reproached for holding the Anabaptist heresy

while it appears, on the contrary, that there were not wanting some among them who practised the baptism of infants.* These opposite statements, exhibited with equal confidence on this obscure branch of ecclesiastical history, are best reconciled and accounted for by supposing them divided in their sentiments on that particular. No indication, however, is discoverable of a rupture in external communion having occurred on that account; and from the acknowledged difficulty of ascertaining the separate existence of Baptist societies during the middle ages, and until the period of the Reformation, the necessary inference is, either that there were none during that interval who adhered to the primitive institute, or, as is far more probable, that they were mingled and incorporated with persons of another persuasion.

Hence it is manifest that the concurrent testimonies of the fathers of the first three or four centuries, in proof of the necessity of baptism to church-fellowship, are urged to no purpose whatever, unless it could be shown that there was no mixed communion, no association of the advocates of adult with the patrons of pedobaptism known in those ages; a supposition which is at direct variance with facts. Nor is it at all difficult to assign a satisfactory reason for that combination of testimonies which the writings of the fathers supply in favour of the essential connexion of the two ordinances. The scanty writings which remain of the authors of the second century afford no decisive indication of the existence of infant baptism in the period in which they flourished: and during the third the few authors whose works have descended to us appear, with the exception of Tertullian, to have imbibed the Pedobaptist persuasion. It was natural for the first class of these fathers, who lived at a time when no doubt or dispute had arisen on the subject, to insist on a compliance with that ordinance; nor was it possible for the second, who extended baptism to infants, and considered it as the indispensable means of regeneration, to pursue another course.

That there was a mixture of persons of different persuasions in Christian societies during the period to which we have adverted appears to be an unquestionable fact; but in what manner those who adhered to the primitive institution reasoned on the subject, as they have left no writings behind them, or none which touch on this subject, must be left to conjecture. Whether they defended their conduct on precisely the same principles with ourselves, or whether they considered pedobaptism as not so properly nullifying as corrupting or enfeebling a Christian ordinance, it is to little purpose to inquire. It is sufficient for us to know that the practice which is stigmatized as *modern* existed as early as a difference of opinion on the subject arose.

In my former treatise I had remarked, "that the decision of Christian writers that baptism, in some form or other, must necessarily precede the celebration of the Eucharist, supposing it ever so unanimous, affords but a feeble proof, since it assumes for its basis the impossibility of the

* See *The History of the Baptists*, by Mr. Ivimey, in which this subject is discussed with much care and impartiality. To those who wish for information respecting many curious and important circumstances, connected with the progress of the Baptist opinions, I would earnestly recommend the perusal of that valuable work; for which the public at large, and our own denomination in particular, are much indebted to the pious and laborious author.

universal prevalence of error." The truth of this assertion is almost self-evident; for if it be possible for error to prevail universally, what should prevent the possibility of its doing so in this particular instance? "No," says our author, "it assumes a very different principle; that the human mind in all its wanderings never took this direction before."* But what is the difference between affirming that the opinion which separates the title to communion from baptism was unknown until it was adopted by the advocates of mixed communion, and asserting "that the human mind never took this direction before?" Are they any thing more than two different modes of expressing the same proposition? To say then that the argument in question assumes for its basis "that the human mind never took this direction before," is to say that it assumes to itself a method of reasoning most repugnant to the rules of logic, however familiar with this writer.

He feels very indignant at my affirming that the right of excluding persons of unquestionable worth and piety was never claimed by antiquity. In opposition to this he adduces the example of Cyprian, who insisted on the rebaptization of heretics and schismatics previous to their reception into the body of the faithful. If it be considered, however, in what light heretics and schismatics were contemplated by that celebrated father, the objection vanishes; since no doubt can be entertained that their preceding profession of Christianity was considered by him as a mere nullity, their faith fundamentally erroneous, the privileges they supposed themselves to possess a vain illusion, and the entire system of their religion an abomination in the sight of God. We find him everywhere exerting his utmost powers of language, which were by no means inconsiderable, in stigmatizing their character and degrading their pretensions. Having little taste for quotation, the following passages may suffice to convince the reader under what opprobrious colours he was accustomed to represent that description of professors. It is proper just to premise, that on their manifesting a disposition to return to the Catholic church, while Cyprian contended for the necessity of their being rebaptized before they were admitted, his opponent, Stephen, insisted on the sufficiency of recantation, accompanied with the imposition of hands,† without reiterating a rite which he concluded could not be repeated without profanation. The latter opinion, in spite of the high authority of the African father, being confirmed by the council of Nice, became the received doctrine of the church, and the opposite tenet was finally denounced as heresy. But to return to Cyprian:— "We," said he, "affirm," referring to the Novatians, who were esteemed schismatics, "that those who come to us are not rebaptized, but baptized. For neither do they receive any thing where there is nothing; but they come to us that they may receive here where all grace and truth is."‡ After stigmatizing the baptism of schismatics as "a filthy and profane dipping," he complains that certain of his colleagues "did not consider that it was written, He who is baptized by the dead, what profit does he derive from his washing? But it is manifest that they who are not in the church are numbered among the dead, and cannot

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 145.
† Cypriani Epistolæ, p. 210. Oxonii. anno 1682. ‡ Ibid. p. 194.

possibly be quickened by him who is not alive; since there is one only church, which, having obtained the grace of eternal life, both lives for ever and quickens the people of God."*

Speaking of heretics, he makes a distinction between such as, having been members of the Catholic church, fell into heresy for a time, but were afterward recovered, and such as sprang originally from them. With respect to the latter he says, "If he who comes from the heretics has not been before baptized in the church, but comes entirely alien and profane, he is to be baptized that he may become a sheep, because the only holy water which can make sheep is in the church." In another epistle we find him reasoning in the following manner:—"The very interrogation," he says, "which takes place in baptism bears witness to the truth. Dost thou believe in eternal life and the remission of sins by the holy church? We mean by it that the remission of sins is given only in the church; but among heretics, where the church is not, sins cannot be remitted. Let them, therefore, who plead for heretics (that is, for their admission into the church without rebaptizing) either alter the interrogation or vindicate the truth, unless they are disposed to give the appellation of the church to those whom they assert to possess true baptism."†

His epistles are full of similar sentiments. What resemblance, let me ask, are they perceived to bear to the principles on which strict communion is founded; or who will be so absurd as to affirm that the example of Cyprian, in rejecting the communion of persons whom he esteemed spiritually dead, and incapacitated for receiving the remission of sins, affords the least countenance for treating in a similar manner such as are acknowledged to possess the most eminent and exalted piety? "True," Mr. Kinghorn replies, "but when they requested admission into the Catholic orthodox church, they had ceased to be heretics or schismatics, since they left the societies where heresy was professed, acknowledged their former error, and requested to be numbered with the orthodox. Notwithstanding this, however, Cyprian insisted on their being rebaptized."‡ But why did he insist upon it? He tells us himself, it was because "they had received nothing, they were baptized by the dead;" they wanted "that holy water peculiar to the church which alone can vivify:" and their pretended baptism, or, to use his own words, "their profane dipping," was necessarily unaccompanied with the remission of sins. In short, however well they might be disposed and prepared, on the application of due means, for the reception of the highest benefits, they were, as yet, in his estimation, in a state of unregeneracy. Hence the reader may judge of the pertinence and correctness of the subsequent remark:—"Their interest in the blessings of the Christian covenant," says Mr. Kinghorn, "was not doubted, yet their right to the Lord's Supper was doubted, because the validity of their baptism was questioned."§ "*Their interest in the blessings of the covenant was not doubted*," although Cyprian declares his conviction, that they had received nothing, that their baptism was a nullity, that they wanted the only water which could quicken, and that,

* Cypriani Epistolæ, p. 194.
‡ Baptism a term of Communion, p. 152.
† Ibid.
§ Ibid. p. 154.

instead of it, they had received only a "sordid and profane dipping, which could not possibly be accompanied with the remission of sins."

The reader will be at no loss to determine which of us is justly chargeable with "taking the present state of opinion, and of applying it to former ages," when he perceives that my opponent is so possessed with these ideas as to be utterly incapable of contemplating the sentiments of Cyprian through the right medium. He entirely forgets the importance he attached to baptism as a regenerating ordinance, and his denial that the persons of whom he was treating had received it; which, combined together, must necessarily have placed them, in his estimation, at the utmost remove from the situation in which pious Pedobaptists are at present considered.

His opponent, Stephen, contended for the propriety of receiving them without a repetition of that rite, because he already conceived it had been truly and solidly performed; this Cyprian denied, and the only question in debate respected the validity of a ceremony which both equally esteemed to be the necessary means of regeneration. Upon the principles common to both, the African father reasoned with most consistency: for how could heretics and schismatics, who were acknowledged to be spiritually dead, communicate life by the performance of a ceremony? and how totally incongruous to suppose every part of their religious service devoid of vitality and force except their baptism, by which, as Cyprian continually urges, they were supposed to confer that renovating spirit which, in every other instance, they were denied to possess. But whatever judgment may be formed of the merits of this controversy, nothing can be more impertinent to the question at issue between my opponent and myself, which is simply, whether the refusal to admit persons of unquestioned piety into the church was the doctrine of the ancient fathers. In proof of this, he alleges the example of Cyprian, who contended for the necessity of rebaptizing such as had been already reclaimed from heresy and schism. Now, if Cyprian's ideas on the subject of baptism had been the same, or in any degree similar to those which are at present entertained, the objection would have been forcible; but when we learn from his own mouth that his demand was founded on their not having been "quickened," on their wanting "the water of life," on their not having approached the fountain of renovation and pardon; in a word, on their still remaining unregenerate; what can be conceived more futile than to adduce his authority for refusing a class of persons to whom, it is acknowledged, none of these objections apply? Let us first insist on the admission of those whom we believe to be destitute of regeneration and pardon, and we must dispose of the authority of Cyprian as we can; but, till that is the case, however we differ from him in its application, we act on one and the same principle.

Mr. Kinghorn is very anxious to prevent his readers from being led to suppose, from certain passages I had quoted, that Cyprian was a friend to mixed communion. If he means by this that he was not disposed to admit into the church such as were, on all hands, acknowledged to be unbaptized, his opinion is undoubtedly correct; nothing was more remote from my intention than to insinuate the contrary. But if

it is his intention to affirm that Cyprian was averse to the mixture of Baptists and Pedobaptists at the Lord's table, he must be supposed to assert that there were none in his communion who adhered to what we conceive the primitive institute; and, considering the extensive influence which he derived from his station as metropolitan of Africa, and the celebrity of his character; this is equivalent to an admission that it had totally disappeared from that province as early as the middle of the third century; a dangerous concession, as well as a most improbable supposition. It is to suppose that a corruption (as we must necessarily deem it) of a Christian ordinance, the explicit mention of which first occurs but fifty years before, had already spread with such rapidity through Africa as to efface every trace and relic of the primitive practice. It is unnecessary to observe the important advantage which such a concession would yield in the controversy with Pedobaptists. The truth is, that unless we are disposed to admit that the baptism of infants had already totally supplanted the original ordinance throughout the Catholic church, Cyprian must be allowed to have patronised mixed communion in precisely the same sense in which it is countenanced at present by our Pedobaptist brethren.

This may suffice to rescue me from the charge of misrepresenting the sentiments of Cyprian; an accusation which excited so much surprise, that I determined to reperuse the epistles of that celebrated writer; but after carefully reading every line, I must solemnly declare that I feel at a loss to discover a shadow of ground for this imputation.

It is not, however, the sentiments of Cyprian only that I am charged with misrepresenting; the Donatists, it is affirmed, proceeded on the same views, when they insisted on the necessity of rebaptizing the members of the Catholic church. "They acted," he says, "exactly on the same principle which Mr. Hall reprobates." That principle, it is unnecessary to repeat, is the propriety, not of baptizing such as have been induced through misconception to neglect the valid performance of that rite, which is our uniform practice, but the exclusion of those against whom nothing is alleged besides the invalidity of their baptism. But nothing can be more remote from the ground on which the Donatists proceeded. They conceived the whole Christian world contaminated by their communion with the African traditors;* that they had fallen into a state of deep and deadly corruption, and so far were they from founding the separation on the insufficiency of their baptism, that they inferred its invalidity solely from the mortal contagion they were deemed to have contracted, and from the abominations they were supposed to tolerate.† They considered the church of Christ, as far as the Catholic societies were concerned, as extinct; and on that account were vehemently urged by St. Austin to reconcile their hypothesis with the promise made to Abraham, "that in his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed." But will any Pedobaptist be found so absurd as to

* Those who delivered up the sacred writings.

† "Dicit enim Parmenianus, hinc probari conscleratum fuisse orbem terrarum criminibus traditionis, et aliorum sacrilegiorum: quia cum multa alia fuerint tempore persecutionis admissa, nulla propterea facta est in ipsis provinciis separatio populorum."—*Contra Epistolam Parmeniani, Augustini*, lib. i.

press the advocates of strict communion with a similar argument? And will it, after this, be contended that the conduct of the Donatists, in refusing to admit the baptism of men whom they viewed as plunged in a state of hopeless degeneracy, bears any resemblance to the conduct of those who repel such as they affect to regard as the most excellent of the earth?

This writer is highly offended with my presuming to express a conviction that the advocates of strict communion have violated more maxims of antiquity than any other sect upon record. The extent to which they have carried their deviation in one particular is already sufficiently obvious. Mr. Kinghorn was challenged to produce an instance of an ancient father who contended for the right of repelling a genuine Christian from the Eucharist. He adduced the example of Cyprian, and of the Donatists; and by this time we presume the intelligent reader is at no loss to perceive how completely these instances have failed.

A writer of his undisputed learning would, doubtless, select the strongest case; we may therefore, until he fortifies his positions better, venture without hesitation to enumerate, among other deviations, the pretended right of excluding such as are acknowledged to be genuine Christians. In ancient times the limits of communion were supposed to be coextensive with those of visible Christianity, and none excluded from the Catholic church but those whom that church deemed heretics or schismatics. Our opponents proceed on an opposite principle; they exclude myriads whom they would not dare to stigmatize with either appellation. In ancient times the necessity of baptism as a qualification for communion was avowedly and uniformly founded on its supposed essential connexion with salvation; our opponents have totally relinquished that ground, yet still assert, with equal vehemence, the same necessity, and absurdly urge the shadow, or rather the skeleton of ancient precedent, after they had disembowelled it, and divested it of its very soul and spirit. In ancient times the whole mass of human population was distributed into two classes, the church and the world; all who were deemed incapable of admission to the first were considered as belonging to the last of these.

The advocates of strict communion have invented a new classification, a division of mankind into the world, the church, by which they mean themselves, and an immense body of pious Pedobaptists, who are comprised in neither of the preceding classes, their charity forbidding them to place them with the former, and their peculiar principles with the latter. Were they to assign them to the world, they would at once declare them out of the pale of salvation; were they to acknowledge them a part of the church, they would convict themselves of the crime of schism, in repelling them from communion. In attempting to designate this class of Christians, compared to which *their* numbers dwindle into impalpable insignificance, they are reduced to the utmost perplexity. On the one hand, they contend that they are not entitled to be considered as disciples; on the other, they loudly proclaim the confidence they entertain of their ready admission into heaven. They are acknowledged to possess faith in an eminent degree, yet it is denied

that they have afforded any legitimate evidence of it; and though *out of the church*, it is confessed it would be the height of bigotry to pretend to invalidate their religious pretensions, to recognise their validity *in it* would be an equal impropriety. It is unnecessary to say how far these maxims deviate from Christian antiquity; nor is it easy to conceive the astonishment their avowal would have excited in the breast of the Cyprians and the Austins, I might add, of the apostles and evangelists of a former age. Guided by the simple dictates of inspiration, accustomed to contemplate the world under two divisions only, that of believers and of unbelievers, they would doubtless have felt themselves at an utter loss to comprehend the possibility of the existence of an equivocal race, who are to be treated as heathens *in* the church, and as Christians *out* of it; and while they possess whatever is necessary for an instant translation to glory, are disqualified for the possession of the most ordinary privileges of the Christian church.

As it is the province of poetry to give to "airy nothings a local habitation and a name," if we cannot eulogize the reasoning of our opponents, we willingly allow them all the praise of a creative fancy due to the invention of so bold a fiction.

The unity of the church is not merely a tenet of antiquity, but a doctrine of Scripture, to which great importance is attached by the inspired writers. Wherever the word occurs without being applied to a particular society, the idea of *unity* is strictly preserved by the invariable use of the singular number; the great community denoted by it is styled the *body of Christ*, of which every believer is declared to be a particular member;* and the perfect *oneness* of the whole is solemnly and repeatedly attested. "The bread which we break," says St. Paul, "is it not the communion of the body of Christ? for we, being many, are *one* bread and *one* body, for we are all partakers of that one bread."† "Now ye," says he, in the same epistle, "are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

This grand and elevating conception of the unity which characterizes the Christian church was ever present to the minds of the fathers; and never do they rise to a higher strain of manly and impressive eloquence than when they are expatiating on this theme. Thus we find Irenæus celebrating that "church which was disseminated throughout the whole world to the very ends of the earth, which carefully preserved the preaching and the faith she had once received, as though she resided in one house; and proclaimed, and taught, and delivered the same doctrine, as though she possessed but one soul, one heart, and one mouth."‡ "Every kind," says Tertullian, "must be referred to its origin. So many and so great churches as now subsist are that one church founded by the apostles, from which they all derive. Thus all are first and apostolical while they retain the relation of peace, the appellation of fraternity, and the symbol of hospitality; which rights are regulated by no other principle than the tradition of the same creed."§ Cyprian, comparing the church to the sun, affirms that while she extends her rays through the whole world, it is yet one light which is everywhere

* Ephes. xxii. 23. Col. i. 24. † 1 Cor. x. 16, 17. ‡ Irenæus, lib. i c. 2, 3.
§ Tertullian, De Præscriptione Hereticorum, p. 209. Lutetiæ Parisiorum, 1675

diffused; nor is the unity of the body separated; her exuberant fertility stretches her branches to the whole earth; she expands her streams most widely, yet the head and origin is one, and it is one mother that is so prolific. "Who," says he, "is so wicked and perfidious, who so maddened by the fury of discord, as to suppose it possible to divide, or attempt to divide, the unity of God, the vestment of Christ, the church of God?" He elsewhere expresses his conviction, that he who does not hold the unity of the church does not hold the faith.*

During the first centuries, the unity of the church was not a splendid visionary theory; it was practically exemplified in the habits of reciprocal communion cultivated and maintained among orthodox societies through every part of the globe."†

So repugnant, however, is the narrow exclusive system which we are opposing to that considered as characteristic of the church, that its advocates profess themselves at a loss to comprehend its meaning, except in the arrogant and offensive sense in which it is sometimes employed to vindicate the pretension of Roman Catholics and high churchmen. "Is the unity of the church," Mr. Kinghorn asks, "destroyed by nothing but strict communion?"‡ And suppose it be, what then? Will it follow that strict communion does *not* destroy it? Whether it has this effect or not is the only inquiry; not whether something else may produce the same effect in an equal degree. He adds, "Is there any sense in which the church of God is or can be considered as one in this imperfect state, except in that which will include all those good men who from conscientious differences cannot unite together on earth?" For the conduct of those good men who refuse to unite with us unless we consent to the performance of rites which in our estimation are unscriptural and superstitious, they alone are responsible; but where nothing of this nature is prepared, as is the case in the present instance, to deem them *personally* disqualified for communion, and on that ground to refuse it, is totally repugnant to every conception of unity.

In the above passage the author breaks his mysterious silence, and for the first time acknowledges that all good men are component parts of the church of God, and are consequently members of Christ's mystical body. But he who concedes this, unless he suppose the Scriptures repealed, must confess his obligation to regulate his treatment of those members by the rules and maxims the New Testament enjoins, which prohibit the least degree of alienation, and assert the equal claim to regard which each individual as a part of the body possesses; insomuch that no language, except that which the Holy Ghost has employed, is sufficient adequately to represent that oneness of spirit, that perfect co-operation, that conjunction, or identity rather, of interests and affections which ought to penetrate and pervade the whole. All other

* De Unit. Ecc. p. 110, 111.

† See upon this branch of the subject the admirable work of Dr. Mason, who, by a copious induction of ancient authorities, has indisputably established the fact that every portion of the orthodox church formed one communion; and most ably illustrated the mode of proceeding by which their union was maintained. The depth and accuracy with which he has discussed the subject must be my apology for not entering into it more fully

‡ Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 101.

unions of a moral nature are in reality lax, feeble, and evanescent compared with that which joins the members of Christ to each other and to their Head. But will it be asserted that the practice of strict communion corresponds with these ideas? or that the treatment of the persons whom it excludes is a practical exemplification of the conduct which the Christians at Corinth were commanded reciprocally to maintain? It will not be pretended: and since these passages, which imperatively enjoin such a behaviour on the members of Christ, and expressly and repeatedly assure us that his body is the church, are still in force, the above concession must either be retracted, or a practice so directly subversive of it be relinquished. If a society, of whatever description it may be, has by mutual consent selected a ceremony as a symbol of their union, those individuals who, for the express purpose of marking their separation, refuse to perform the ceremony, have most unequivocally renounced that society; and by parity of reason, since the joint celebration of the Lord's Supper is established in the church as the discriminating token by which its members are to recognise each other, to refuse to join in it is equivalent to an express declaration that the persons from whom we withdraw, as *personally* disqualified, are not considered as parts of the church. It is acknowledged, however, in the foregoing passage, that all good men belong to it. But if so, they are also members of the body of Christ, and consequently entitled to exactly the same treatment as was enjoined on the Corinthians towards each other. But supposing, in consequence of minor differences of opinion, the latter had proceeded to an open rupture of communion, and refused to unite in the celebration of the Eucharist, will it be asserted that the pathetic and solemn injunctions of their inspired teacher would not have been violated by such a measure? The answer to this question is obvious, and its application to the point under discussion irresistible. The advocates of the exclusive system, on whatever side they turn, are surrounded and pressed with difficulties from which it is utterly impossible for them to escape. To affirm that Pedobaptism is of so malignant a tendency as to sever its patrons from the mystical body of Christ is at once to impugn their hopes of salvation; since the supposition of a vital efficacy imparted from Christ as the head, which fails to constitute the subject of it a member, is equally unintelligible and unscriptural. The language adopted on this subject is confessedly figurative, but not on that account obscure. Its foundation is evidently laid in that derivation of spiritual life to the souls of the faithful for which they are indebted to their union with the Saviour; for which reason it would be the height of absurdity to refuse the application of the figure on an occasion which comprehends its whole import and meaning. We may therefore with confidence affirm that all genuine believers are alike members of Christ's body. But if this be admitted, they are as much entitled to the benefit, not merely of admission into the church, but of all those benevolent sympathies and attentions prescribed in the preceding passages as though they had been mentioned by name; since the only ground on which they are enforced is the relation the objects of them are supposed to sustain to that body.

Thus we perceive in the principles and practice of our opponents another glaring instance of gross violation as well of the dictates of inspiration as of the maxims of Christian antiquity; both which concur in inculcating the doctrine of the absolute unity of the church, of its constituting Christ's mystical body, and of the horrible incongruity, I might almost say impiety, of attempting to establish a system which represents a great majority of its members as *personally* disqualified for communion.

Once more; what foundation will they find in ancient precedents for the peculiar distinction allotted to one particular ceremony above every other, in consequence of which they allow the cultivation of the most intimate religious intercourse, of the most perfect intercommunity in every branch of worship with members of other denominations, providing they do not so far forget themselves as to lose sight of their disputes at the Lord's table? The Holy Ghost informs us, that the end of Christ's death was to "gather into one the children of God who were scattered abroad." It seems strange, that one of the principal purposes of its celebration should be to scatter abroad those children of God who are gathered together everywhere else. Be this as it may, we challenge these zealous champions of precedent to produce the faintest vestige of such a practice in the ages of antiquity; or to direct us to a single nation, or sect, or individual, for an example of that capricious and arbitrary distinction attached to the Eucharist by which it is refused to an immense multitude, who are considered as entitled to every other mark of Christian fraternity.

These observations, we trust, will be amply sufficient to justify the assertion, that our opponents have violated, with respect to ecclesiastical economy, more maxims of antiquity than any other sect upon record; nor will the intelligent reader be at a loss to perceive, that the weight of this censure is little, if at all, impaired by their conformity in one particular, by their insisting upon baptism as a term of communion; when it is recollected that the principles on which they found it have no relation whatever to those on which it was maintained by the ancient fathers. For the length to which this part of the discussion is extended a natural and laudable anxiety to repel the charge of misrepresentation will probably be deemed a sufficient apology.

CHAPTER XI.

Conclusion.

Before I put a final period to my part in this controversy, the attention of the reader is requested to a few miscellaneous remarks, which naturally arise out of the contemplation of the whole subject.

It is just matter of surprise, that the topic in debate should be regarded by any serious and intelligent Christian as of small importance. Such a conclusion can only be ascribed to extreme inattention, or to the force of an inveterate, though perhaps latent, prejudice, pro-

ducing an unmerited predilection in favour of certain systems of ecclesiastical polity, which are incapable of sustaining the ordeal of inquiry. That those should shrink from the investigation of such topics who, by receiving their religion from the hands of their superiors in a mass, have already relinquished the liberty of thinking for themselves, is no more than might well be expected. But to minds free and unfettered, accustomed to spurn at the shackles of authority, and above all, to Protestant dissenters, whose peculiar boast is the privilege of following, in the organization of their churches, no other guide but the Scriptures, that such subjects should appear of little moment is truly astonishing. The inquiry first in importance undoubtedly is, What is Christianity? What, supposing the truth of Scripture, is to be believed, and to be done, with a view to eternal life? Happily for the Christian world, there probably never was a time when, in the solution of this question, so much unanimity was witnessed among the professors of serious piety as at the present. Systems of religion fundamentally erroneous are falling fast into decay; while the subordinate points of difference, which do not affect the primary verities of Christianity, nor the ground of hope, are either consigned to oblivion, or are the subjects of temperate and amicable controversy; and in consequence of their subsiding to their proper level, the former appear in their just and natural magnitude.

Hence in the present state of the church, externally considered, the evil most to be deplored is, the unnatural distance at which Christians stand from each other; the spirit of sects, the disposition to found their union on the "wood, hay, and stubble" of human inventions, or of disputable tenets, instead of building on the eternal rock, the "faith once delivered to the saints." They all profess to look forward to a period when these divisions will cease, and there will be one fold under one Shepherd. But, while every denomination flatters itself with the persuasion of that fold being its own, the principal use to which the annunciations of prophecy are directed is to supply a motive for redoubled exertions in the defence and extension of their respective peculiarities; and instead of hailing the dawn of a brighter day, as an event in which all are equally interested, it is too often considered, there is reason to fear, as destined to complete the triumph of a party.

If we consult the Scriptures, we shall be at no loss to perceive that the unity of the church is not merely a doctrine most clearly revealed, but that its practical exemplification is one of the principal designs of the Christian dispensation. We are expressly told that our Saviour purposed by his death to "gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad;" and for the accomplishment of this design, he interceded, during his last moments, in language which instructs us to consider it as the grand means of the conversion of the world. His prophetic anticipations were not disappointed; for while a visible unanimity prevailed among his followers, his cause everywhere triumphed: the concentrated zeal, the ardent co-operation of a comparative few, impelled by one spirit, and directed to one object, were more than a match for hostile myriads. No sooner was the bond of unity broken,

by the prevalence of intestine quarrels and dissensions, than the interests of truth languished; until Mahometanism in the east, and popery in the west, completed the work of deterioration, which the loss of primitive simplicity and love, combined with the spirit of intolerance, first commenced.

If the religion of Christ ever resumes her ancient lustre, and we are assured by the highest authority she will, it must be by retracing our steps, by reverting to the original principles on which, considered as a social institution, it was founded. We must go back to the simplicity of the first ages—we must learn to quit a subtle and disputatious theology, for a religion of love, emanating from a few divinely energetic principles, which pervade almost every page of inspiration, and demand nothing for their cordial reception and belief besides an humble and contrite heart. Reserving to ourselves the utmost freedom of thought in the interpretation of the sacred oracles, and pushing our inquiries, as far as our opportunities admit, into every department of revealed truth, we shall not dream of obtruding precarious conclusions on others, as articles of faith; but shall receive with open arms all who appear to "love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," and find a sufficient bond of union—a sufficient scope for all our sympathies—in the doctrine of the Cross. If the Saviour appears to be loved, obeyed, and adored—if his blood is sprinkled on the conscience, and his spirit resides in the heart, why should we be dissatisfied? *we* who profess to be actuated by no other motive, to live to no other purpose, than the promotion of his interest.

If the kingdom of Christ, like the kingdoms of this world, admitted of local and discordant interests, and the possession of exclusive privileges—if it were a system of compromise between the selfish passions of individuals and the promotion of the general good, the policy of conferring on one class of its subjects certain advantages and immunities withheld from another might be easily comprehended. But in this, as well as many other features, it essentially differs. Founded on the basis of a divine equality, its privileges are as free as air; and there is not a single blessing which it proposes to bestow but is held by the same tenure, and is capable of being possessed to the same extent, by every believer. The freedom which it confers is of so high a character, and the dignity to which it elevates its subjects, as the sons of God, so transcendent, that whether they are "Barbarians or Scythians, bond or free, male or female, they are from henceforth one in Christ Jesus." In asserting the equal right which the gentiles possessed, in common with the Jews, to all the privileges attached to the Christian profession, Peter founds his argument on this very principle. "And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as unto us, and *put no difference between us and them*, purifying their hearts by faith." In his apprehension, it was God, the Searcher of hearts, who by the collation of his Spirit, in his marvellous and sanctifying gifts, having made no distinction between the gentiles and themselves, decided the controversy. If that great apostle reasoned correctly on the subject, we have only to change the term gentiles for

Pedobaptists, or for any other denomination of sincere Christians, and the inference remains in its full force.

Among the other attempts to deter us from pursuing a system established by such high authority, it is extraordinary that we should be reminded of the fearful responsibility we incur. To this topic Mr. Kinghorn has devoted a whole chapter. When it is recollected that we plead for the reception of none whom Christ has not received, for none whose hearts are not purified by faith, and who are not possessed of the same spirit, the communication of which was considered by St. Peter as a decisive proof that *no difference was put between them and others* by God himself, it is easy to determine where the danger lies. Were we to suffer ourselves to lose sight of these principles, and by discountenancing and repelling those whom he accepts, to dispute the validity of his seal, and subject to our miserable scrutiny pretensions which have passed the ordeal and received the sanction of Him "who understandeth the hearts," we should have just reason to tremble for the consequences; and, with all our esteem for the piety of many of our opponents, we conceive it no injury or insult to put up the prayer of our Lord for them—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

He who alters the terms of communion changes the fundamental laws of Christ's kingdom. He assumes a legislative power, and ought, in order to justify that conduct, to exhibit his credentials, with a force and splendour of evidence equal at least to those which attested the divine legation of Moses and the prophets.

It has been frequently observed on this occasion, that every voluntary society possesses the power of determining on the qualifications of its members: and that, for the same reason, every church is authorized to enact such terms of admission as it shall see fit. This conclusion, however, is illogical and unfounded. There is little or no analogy between the two cases. Human societies originate solely in the private views and inclinations of those who compose them; and as they are not founded on Divine institution, so neither are they restricted with respect to the objects they are destined to pursue. The church is a society instituted by Heaven; it is the visible seat of that "kingdom which God has set up;" the laws by which it is governed are of his prescribing, and the purposes which it is designed to accomplish are limited and ascertained by Infinite Wisdom. When, therefore, from its analogy to other societies, it is inferred that it has an equal right to organize itself at its pleasure, nothing can be more fallacious; unless it be meant merely to assert its exemption from the operation of physical force, which is a view of the subject with which we are not at present concerned. In every step of its proceedings, it is amenable to a higher than human tribunal; and on account of its freedom from external control, its obligation, *in foro conscientiæ*, exactly to conform to the mandates of revelation, is the more sacred and the more indispensable; being loosened from every earthly tie, on purpose that it may be at liberty to "follow the Lord whithersoever he goeth."

That these maxims, plain and obvious as they must appear, have been too often totally lost sight of, he who has the slightest acquaint

ance with ecclesiastical history must be aware; and to their complete abandonment we are indebted for the introduction of strict communion.

"The Baptists," Mr. Kinghorn informs us, "consider themselves as holding to notice *one* neglected truth."* Whether they have adopted a mode of proceeding the most likely to accomplish their object may be justly doubted. Independently, however, of any such consideration, it is the *principle*, thus distinctly avowed, to which we object—the *principle* of organizing a church with a specific view to the propagation of some particular truth; which is a perversion of the original end and design of Christian societies. Nothing, it is certain, was more remote from the views of their first founders, who aimed at nothing less than to render them the general depositories of the "faith once delivered to the saints;" and for this purpose carefully inculcated the whole "truth as it is in Jesus," along with the duty of preserving it incorrupt and entire; without the most distant intimation that it was their province to watch over one department with more vigilance than another: least of all was it their design to recommend as the object of preference an external ceremony, the nature of which was destined to become a subject of debate among Christians.

Let each denomination pursue this plan—let each fix upon the promotion of some one truth as the specific object of its exertions, and the effect will soon appear, not only in extending the spirit of disunion, but in the injury which the interests of truth itself will sustain. Every denomination will exhibit some portion of it, in a distorted and mutilated form; none will be in possession of the whole, and the result will be something like the confusion of Babel, where every man spoke in a separate dialect. As the beauty of truth consists chiefly in the harmony and proportion of its several parts, it is as impossible to display it to advantage in fragments as to give a just idea of a noble and majestic structure by exhibiting a single brick.

What is the consequence which must be expected from teaching an illiterate assembly that the principal design of their union is to extend the practice of a particular ceremony, but to invest it with an undue importance in their eyes, and by tempting them to look upon themselves as Christians of a higher order, to foster an overweening self-conceit, to generate selfish passions, and encourage ambitious projects? Accustomed to give themselves a decided preference above others, to treat with practical contempt the religious pretensions of the best and wisest of men, and to live in an element of separation and exclusion, it would be astonishing indeed if their humility were not impaired, and the more delicate sympathies of Christian affection almost extinguished. In the situation in which they have placed themselves, they are reduced to a necessity of performing continually those operations which other denominations reserve for the last extremity; they are familiarized to the infliction of the most formidable sentence that the church is empowered to pass, and to that excision of the members of Christ from the body to which others proceed with fear and trembling.

It is freely admitted that there are seasons when it is the duty of a Christian society to bend its particular attention to the exhibition and

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 69.

defence of a neglected branch of truth, in order to supply an antidote to the errors by which it may be attempted to be corrupted. There is no fundamental doctrine which we may not be called upon in an especial manner to maintain and fortify in its turn. But to make this the specific object of the constitution of a church is totally different; it is to contract its views and limit its efforts in a manner utterly inconsistent with the design of its institution, which is to exhibit both the theory and practice of Christianity in all its plenitude and extent.

An exception, however, must be made, where the truth which is said to be neglected is fundamental. The assertion and vindication of such a truth is equivalent to the maintenance of Christianity itself, which, in common with every other system, is incapable of surviving the destruction of its vital parts. Hence the Reformers were justified in laying the doctrine of justification by faith as the basis of the reformed religion, because the formal denial of that truth is incompatible with the existence of a church. But where religious communities have been founded on refined speculations, or on some particular mode of explaining and interpreting disputable tenets, the most mischievous consequences have resulted. The people usually denominated Quakers set out with the professed design of exhibiting the doctrine of the Spirit, which they chose to consider as a *neglected* truth, and the consequence has been such a distortion of that momentous doctrine as has probably contributed not a little to subject it to contempt. The Sandemanians profess to constitute their societies with an express view to the revival of certain *neglected* truths; and the effect, as far as their efforts have succeeded, has been the extinction of vital piety. The high Calvinists, or, to speak more properly, the antinomians, are loud and clamorous in professing their solicitude to revive a certain class of *neglected* truths, and the result of their labour has been to corrupt the few truths they possess, and to consign others of equal importance to contempt and oblivion. In each of these instances, by detaching particular portions from the system to which it belongs, that continuity of truth has been broken, and the vital communication between its respective parts, on which its life and vigour depend, interrupted.

It was reserved for our opponents to pursue the same system, under a new form, by selecting the ceremony of baptism as their distinguishing symbol, and to degrade the Christian profession, in our apprehension, by placing it in the due administration of the element of water.

Where, it is natural to ask (though it is an inferior consideration)—where is the *policy* of such a proceeding? What tendency has it to recommend and to propagate the rite, about which such zeal is exerted, and such solicitude expressed? Will the insisting on it as a term of communion give it any additional evidence, or invest it with supernumerary charms? Will it be better relished and received for its approaching in the form of an exaction, than if it was intrusted to the force of argument and persuasion? Were it permitted to have recourse to intimidation in the concerns of religion, where are our means and resources? where shall we look for that splendour of reputation, that command of emolument and power which shall render a state of separation from Baptist

societies an intolerable grievance? Let us learn to think soberly of ourselves, and not endeavour to enforce the justest principles by means foreign to their nature, nor, by substituting an impotent menace instead of argument, subject them to reprobation and ridicule.

Mr. Kinghorn gives it as his decided opinion, that for a Pedobaptist statedly to attend the ministry of a Baptist is a dereliction of principle. A great gulf ought in his apprehension to be fixed between the two denominations. But how is it possible on this system to indulge the hope of effecting a revolution in the public mind, when all the usual channels of communication are cut off, and the means of rational conviction laid under an interdict? If the hearers of both denominations are bound to confine their attendance to teachers who will esteem it their duty to confirm them in their respective persuasions, the transition to an opposite system may be deemed almost a miracle. It were more natural to suppose that in this instance, as well as others of greater moment, faith cometh by hearing, than that a crop should spring up where no seed, or none but what is of an opposite kind, has been sown.

It is not a little curious to find it objected to the principles we are attempting to defend, that they are adapted to an imperfect, rather than a perfect state of things; when the utility of the entire system of Christianity results entirely from such an adaptation, and is nothing more than a sublime and mysterious condescension to human weakness and imperfection. What is the gospel but a proposed alliance, in which infinite purity comes into contact with pollution, infinite justice with human demerits, and ineffable riches with hopeless penury? "Mixed communion," Mr. Kinghorn observes, "displays another genuine feature of error. It is only to be found (even on the concession of its warmest supporters) in that mingled state of things which takes place between the first purity of the church and the ultimate display of gospel light. In the times of the apostles it had no place; nor do we expect it will be found when 'the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God.'"* Specious as this proposition may appear, it is in reality nothing but a truism. We both suppose infant baptism to be an innovation unknown in primitive times. But mixed communion means nothing else than the union of Baptists and Pedobaptists in the same religious society. To say, therefore, that no such practice was known in the time of the apostles is to say that the two denominations were not united, while there was only one: a profound discovery, the merit of which we will not dispute with this author. But when he proceeds to remark that it will be equally unknown in the period usually styled the latter-day glory, we must be permitted to remind him of a state incomparably superior, and to ask him whether he supposes his exclusive system will extend there; whether the Pedobaptist, dying in the possession of his supposed error, is disqualified to join "the spirits of just men made perfect; to mingle with the general assembly of the church of the first-born?" If this is not affirmed, let him reflect on the enormous impropriety of demanding a greater uniformity among the candidates for admission into the church militant than is requisite for a union with the church triumphant—of claiming from the faithful, while encompassed with darkness and im

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p 77

perfection, more harmony and correctness of sentiment than is necessary to qualify them to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God—of pretending to render a Christian society an enclosure more sacred and more difficult of access than the abode of the Divine Majesty—and of investing every little Baptist teacher with the prerogative of repelling from his communion a Howe, a Leighton, or a Brainerd, whom the Lord of glory will welcome to his presence. Transubstantiation presents nothing more revolting to the dictates of common sense.

The blessedness of a future world is ever represented in Scripture as the final end and scope of the Christian profession: the doctrines which it embraces, the duties which it enjoins, are represented as terminating in that as its ultimate object. Religion itself, in its most general nature, is necessary only in consequence of the relation which the subjects of it bear to a future state: "patient continuance in well doing" is requisite, because it is the only safe and legitimate way of aspiring "to glory, honour, and immortality;" and the utmost that can be said to enforce any particular branch of practice is, that it tends to prepare us for the eternal felicity. The church of Christ is unquestionably ordained merely as one of the instruments of qualifying its members for the possession of eternal life: but for this, it would have had no existence; and beyond this we can conceive no end or purpose it was intended to accomplish. In a system of means, many things may be useful on account of their tendency to facilitate the accomplishment of their object, which are not absolutely necessary. They may accelerate its attainment, or attain it with greater certainty than it could be effected in their absence. But since the necessity of means arises solely from their relation to the end, *that*, whatever it be, without which the end may certainly be secured, can never be affirmed to be *necessary*, without an absolute contradiction. Is the organization of the church, then, a means of obtaining eternal life? Is it ordained solely with a view of preparing man for a future state of felicity, or in order to secure some temporary and secular object? If it be allowed that it is the former alone which it is designed to obtain, to assert that baptism is necessary to qualify for communion, when communion itself is only necessary as a means of preparing us for heaven, which it is allowed may with certainty be obtained without baptism, is a flat contradiction. It is to affirm that what is no essential to the attainment of a certain end is yet a necessary part of the order of means, which is palpably absurd.

Let it be remembered that we are far from intending to insinuate that baptism is of little moment; or that a wanton inattention to this part of the will of Christ is consistent with a well-founded assurance of salvation: our sole intention is to expose the inconsistency of supposing an involuntary mistake on this subject a sufficient bar to communion, while it is acknowledged to be none to the participation of future blessedness.

Our opponents will probably remind us of the perfect unanimity which will prevail on this subject (in our apprehension) in the heavenly world. But when will this unanimity take place? will it be previous to an ad-

mission to the society of the blessed, or subsequent to that event? If it be subsequent, in receiving believers on the ground of their vital union with Christ, we follow the order of heaven, which our opponents invert: while we indulge the hope that in consequence of coming into a closer contact with persons whose views on the subject of baptism are correct, they will be gradually induced to embrace them; firmly persuaded that whether this is the result or not, we incur no danger in following a celestial precedent. We are not surprised at our opponents making such high pretensions to purity in the discipline and economy of their churches; we only admire their modesty in not insisting on their loftiest and sublimest distinction, which consists in their societies being more select than heaven, and in its being more difficult to become a member of a Baptist church than to be saved.

The reader is requested to remember the extraordinary positions which Mr. Kinghorn has been compelled to advance in defence of his restrictive system. He will recollect, we hope, that he has found it necessary to affirm that the most eminent saints, not excepting the illustrious army of martyrs, made no true profession of that religion for which they laboured, and for which, with a divine prodigality, they shed their blood; that though worthy of "walking with Christ in white," and of joining in the cry, "How long, O Lord, wilt thou avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" they gave no scriptural evidence of their faith, and were consequently not entitled to its privileges; and that their claim to Christian communion was defeated, *not in consequence of any specific or peculiar connexion between the two ordinances in question*, but solely on account of its being one of those privileges. He has found it necessary to assert that the terms of communion and of salvation are both immutable; that if baptism was ever necessary to salvation, it is so still; and, consequently, that an involuntary mistake respecting a branch of revelation is equally criminal and dangerous with its wilful rejection. He has found it necessary to affirm that Pedobaptists are not received into the Christian dispensation, although he expresses his confident expectation of their being interested in its blessings and justified by faith in its promises. These are but a scanty specimen of the wild and eccentric paradoxes into which this writer has been betrayed while in quest of new discoveries, and, resolved to project an *original* defence of strict communion, he has quitted the sober path of his predecessors.

In some of the leading points of the argument he has totally abandoned what Mr. Booth considered as forming his stronghold. Thus, though he evinces an extreme reluctance to appear to coincide with the writer of these sheets in any thing, he in fact concedes all that he contended for respecting the essential difference between the baptism of John and that of Christ, and entertains no doubt that the twelve disciples at Ephesus were rebaptized. Thus the *palmarium argumentum* of his venerable predecessor is relinquished. Mr. Booth contended, that though the Pedobaptists are *received* in the sense the apostle intended in that expression, their right to the Lord's Supper cannot be inferred; Mr. Kinghorn denies that they *are;* and thus the two champions are at variance, *toto cælo*, on the interpretation of the passages

chiefly concerned in this controversy. As these passages* form a principal part of the gist of the debate, the intelligent reader is requested carefully to examine Mr. Kinghorn's mode of interpretation; and should it appear to be loaded with insuperable difficulties, it may with confidence be inferred that the cause of strict communion, were it liable to no other objection, is untenable. He had too much acumen to reject Mr. Booth's solution of the difficulty, could it have been plausibly supported. Conscious it could not, he has attempted to substitute another, which is accompanied with still greater, though perhaps not quite such obvious inconveniences.

Dextrum Scylla latus, lævum implacata Charybdis
Obsidet.

The writer is far from anticipating a speedy or sudden revolution in the sentiments of his brethren as the consequence of his efforts in this controversy. He is contented to await the slow operation of time in extinguishing the prejudices which time alone has produced, conscious that bodies of men are peculiarly tenacious of their habits of thinking, and that it is wisely ordained that the conquest achieved by just and enlightened principles should be firm and durable in proportion to the tardiness of their progress. Another generation must probably rise up before the rust of prejudice is sufficiently worn off to leave room for the operation of reason and the exercise of free inquiry on this subject. Our opponents, aware that a current has already set in which threatens at no very distant period to sweep away their narrow and contracted system, are exerting every effort to stop it, but in vain:

Labitur, et labetur, in omne volubilis ævum.

Mr. Kinghorn, while he acknowledges with extreme regret that the younger part of our ministers are generally unfavourably disposed to the cause he has attempted to advocate, expresses his conviction that further reflection and inquiry will correct the aberrations of their youth and recall them to the ancient path. But when was it ever known that an extension of knowledge produced a contraction of feeling, or that the effect of a more extended survey of the vast sphere of philosophical and religious speculation was to magnify the importance of sectarian peculiarities? He anticipates this effect chiefly from the perusal of ecclesiastical history,—a profound acquaintance with which is to put them in possession of the marvellous secret, that mixed communion was unknown in the ages which succeeded the universal prevalence of infant baptism. The general agreement to consider that rite as an indispensable prerequisite to communion during those ages is to be received, it seems, as an oracle; while the baptism which they practised is discarded as a nullity, the sole ground on which it was supposed to be necessary deemed a most dangerous error, and innumerable other opinions and usages of equal notoriety and extent consigned to the moles and to the bats. He must have a wonderful faculty of sanguine anticipation who supposes that an unfettered mind will reject the authority of antiquity in every particular except that which suits his own

* Rom xiv. 1; xv. 7.

humour; and after considering whatever distinguishes the ecclesiastical economy of these ages from that of dissenting societies as a striking instance of human weakness, stop short in the career of reprobation just at the point he is pleased to prescribe. Such a procedure would be (as Cicero observes on another occasion) not to argue, but to divine; and it would be just as reasonable, after making a collection of all the peculiar opinions and practices of Christian antiquity, to determine by lot which of them should be received.

Far from indulging the apprehension of a retrograde motion from enlarged and liberal to narrow and contracted principles, we have every reason to conclude, that the polar ice once broken, they will circulate to a much wider extent; and the revolution which has already commenced among those who are destined to guide the public mind, shortly produce a powerful effect on the people, who never fail, sooner or later, to follow the impulse of their public teachers. As it is this which gave rise to the present practice, so it is still by a sort of incantation, by mustering the shades of the mighty dead, of a Booth and a Fuller especially, who are supposed to cast a dark and frowning aspect on the petulance of modern innovation, that it is chiefly supported; and with all due respect to the talents of Mr. Kinghorn, it may be confidently affirmed, that, but for the authority of these worthies, his weapons would produce as little execution as the dart of Priam.

Deference to great names is a sentiment which it would be base to attempt to eradicate, and impossible, were it attempted. But, like other offsprings of the mind, it is at first rude and ill-shapen. It makes no selection, no discrimination—it retains the impress of its original entire, just as it was made: it is a vague, undistinguishing admiration, which consecrates in a mass all the errors and deformities along with the real excellences of its object. Time only, the justest of all critics, gives it correctness and proportion, and converts what is at first merely the action of a great upon an inferior mind into an enlightened and impartial estimate of distinguished worth. The effect produced by coming into an intimate contact with a commanding intellect is of a mixed nature; it subdues and enslaves the very persons whom it enlightens, and almost invariably leaves a portion of its sediment where it deposites its wealth. It must be placed at a certain distance before we derive from it all the pure defecated good it is capable of imparting; and with all my admiration of the inestimable men already mentioned, and my conviction of the value of their services, I am persuaded many years must elapse before we entirely surmount the effects of a long-continued dictatorship.

When the views of baptism by which we are distinguished as a denomination are once exonerated from the odium arising from the practice we have been opposing, and the prejudices which it has necessarily occasioned have subsided, we may justly presume that the former will be examined with more impartiality; nor is it possible to assign a reason for their having made so limited a progress, besides the extreme disgust inspired by this most unchristian and unnatural alliance. It is too much to expect an enlightened public will be eager to enrol themselves among the members of a sect which displays much of the intolerance of popery

without any portion of its splendour, and prescribes, as the pledge of conversion, the renunciation of the whole Christian world. While the vestibule is planted with the most repulsive forms, while *sedent in limine Diræ*, few will be intrepid enough to enter.

On Mr. Kinghorn's system, which reprobates the attendance of the members of Baptists and Pedobaptists on the ministry of each other, as a dereliction of principle, to calculate the ages which must in all probability elapse ere our principles obtain a general prevalence would form an amusing problem. The Hindoo chronology, which assigns to its fabulous dynasties millions and millions of years, might furnish a specimen of the scale on which such a calculation should proceed; and unless some such passion is expected to seize the members of other communities as impelled the Queen of Sheba to come from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, the projected revolution must be pronounced, in the absence of miracles, impossible. What can be the motive of the advocates of strict communion for studiously presenting every possible obstacle to the exclusive diffusion of our principles? We might be almost tempted to conjecture that they were afraid of losing their title to the appellation of a "little flock," or that they consider the Baptist denomination as an order of nobility or of knighthood, whose dignity is impaired in proportion as it is diffused. Be this as it may, the spirit of the age, distinguished by the superior expansion of its views, and the extensive co-operation of all sects and parties in the promotion of objects of public utility,—the little success which has accompanied the narrow and restrictive system,—the dictates of Scripture, and the movements of that divine charity which those dictates have impressed,—all invite us to "consider our ways," to retrace our steps, and endeavour to draw our fellow-christians "by the cords of love, and the bands of a man." When we have learned to "make no difference" where the Searcher of hearts makes none,—when we show an alacrity in embracing all who love Jesus Christ as members of the same mystical body,—when, in conformity to the genius of Christianity, there is with us neither Jew nor Greek, neither Baptist nor Pedobaptist, but Christ is all in all,—the reasons on which our peculiar practice is founded will, in all probability, meet with a very different reception from what has hitherto attended them, accompanied, as they have been, with a system of impotent oppression and unmerited contumely. But whether these expectations, to their full extent, are realized or not, we shall at least improve ourselves, wipe off the reproach of bigotry and intolerance, and rise in the esteem of a religious and enlightened public, by convincing them that our zeal for a ceremonial institution has not betrayed us into a forgetfulness that "love is the fulfilling of the law."

Thus have I endeavoured to reply to the reasoning of my opponent on this subject: whether my answer will be deemed by a discerning public conclusive or otherwise, I trust they will be convinced that no attempt has been made to evade the force of his arguments, nor any thing passed over in silence to which he can be supposed to attach the least degree of importance. My anxiety to leave nothing untouched which bears any relation to the merits of the controversy

has extended this reply beyond my wishes and my expectation; conceiving it better to incur the charge of tediousness, than that of discussing a polemical point of high importance in a slight and superficial manner. The mode of establishing a doctrine in opposition to prevailing opinions and prejudices is necessarily much more circuitous than the strict laws of reasoning require in exhibiting its evidence to the understanding at a subsequent period. In the militant state of a doctrine, it is generally found necessary to incur frequent repetitions, to represent the same idea in a variety of lights, and to encounter a multitude of petty cavils and verbal sophisms, which, in its further progress, sink into oblivion. When, in consequence of a series of discussions, a doctrine is firmly rooted in the public mind, the proof by which it is sustained may be presented, without impairing its force, in a more compact and elegant form; and the time, I am persuaded, is not very remote, when it will be matter of surprise that it should have been thought necessary to employ so many words in evincing a truth so nearly self-evident as that which it is the object of the writer of these pages to establish. The flimsy sophistry by which it is attempted to be obscured, and the tedious process of reasoning opposed to these attempts, will be alike forgotten, and the very existence of the controversy remembered only among other melancholy monuments of human imperfection.

Some acceleration of that period the author certainly anticipates from his present and his former productions, though he is fully aware that the chief obstacles which impede its approach are such as it is not in the power of argument alone to subdue. Reasoning supplies an effectual antidote to mere speculative error, but opposes a feeble barrier to inveterate prejudice, and to that contraction of feeling which is the fruitful parent of innumerable mistakes and misconceptions in religion. There is no room, however, for despondency; for as the dictates of Christian charity will always be found to coincide with the justest principles of reason, the first effect of inquiry will be to enlighten the mind, the second to expand and enlarge the heart; and when the Spirit is poured down from on high, he will effectually teach us that God is *Love*, and that we never please him more than when we embrace with open arms, without distinction of sect or party, all who bear his image.

END OF VOLUME I.

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